Ἐν ὀλίγῳ Χριστιανός.

THE

Almoſt Chriſtian Diſcover'd:

OR,

The Falſe Profeſſor

TRYED and CAST.

Being the Subſtance of Seven

SERMONS,

Firſt Preached at *Sepulchres*, *London*, 1661. And now at the Importunity of Friends made Publick.

The Eleventh Edition.

By *MATTHEW MEAD.*

Luke, 16. 14. *And the Phariſees who were Covetous, heard all theſe things, and they derided him.*
Ver. 15. *And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Ye are they which juſtifie your ſelves before Men; but God knoweth your Hearts: For that which is highly Eſteemed amongſt Men, is Abomination in the ſight of God.*

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MAY

To the Congregation at *Sepulchres*, that were the Auditors of theſe Sermons;

Grace and Peace be multiplyed.

Beloved,

WHat the meaning of that Providence was, that called me to the occupation of my Talent amongſt you this Summer, will be beſt read and underſtood by the Effects of it upon your own Souls: The kindly encreaſe of Grace and Holineſs in heart and life, can only prove it to have been in mercy: where this is not the fruit of the Word, there it becomes a Judgment. The World travels with Life or Death, ſalvation or damnation, and bringeth forth one or the other in every Soul that hears it; I would not for a World (were it in my power to make the choice) that my labours, which were meant and deſigned for the promotion of your immortal Souls, to the glory of the other World, in a preſent purſuance of the things of your peace, ſhould be found to have been a Miniſtration of Death and Condemnation *in the great day of Jeſus Chriſt. Yet this (the Lord knoweth) is the too common effect of the moſt plain and powerful preaching of the Goſpel.* The Waters of the Sanctuary *do not always heal where they come; for there are* Ezek. 47. 11.
miry and mariſh places that ſhall be given to Salt, מלח נתנו: *The ſame word* (מ ח) *is elſewhere in Scripture rendred* barrenneſs, *as* Pſal. 107. 34.
turneth a fruitful Land מ ח into barrenneſs,

renness, *so that the Judgment denounced upon these miry and marish places is, that the* curse of barrenness *shall rest upon them, notwithstanding the* waters of the Sanctuary *overflow them.*

It is sad, but certain, that the Gospel inflicteth a Death of its own, as well as the Law, or else
Jude 12. *how are those Trees in* Jude *said to be* δὶς ἀποθανόντα, twice dead, and plucked up by the roots? *Yea, that which in it self is the greatest mercy, through the interposition of Mens lusts, and the efficacy of this cursed seed of unbelief, turneth to the greatest Judgment, as the richest and most generous Wine makes the sharpest Vinegar. Our*
Rom. 5. 8. *Lord Christ himself, the choicest mercy that the*
Joh. 3.16. *Bowels of a God could bless a perishing World withal; whose coming (himself bearing witness) was no less Errand than that of Eternal Life and Blessedness to the lost and cursed Sons of* Adam; *Yet to how many was he* אבן נגף דצור מב מיול, a stone of stumbling, and a Rock
John 10. 10. of offence; *yea,* a gin, and a snare, *and that to both the Houses of* Israel, *the only professing people*
Isa. 2. 14. *of God at that day in the World? And is he not a stone of stumbling in the Ministry of the Gospel to many Professors to this very day, upon which they fall and are broken? when he saith,* Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me; *he doth therein plainly suppose, that both in his Person and Doctrine, the generality of Men would be offended in him.*

Not that this is the design of Christ and the Gospel, but it comes so to pass through the corruptions of the hearts of Men, whereby they make light of Christ and stand out against that Life and Grace which the Lord Jesus by his Blood so dearly purchased, and is by the Preaching of the Gospel so freely tendered; the wilful refusal whereof will as surely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will secure our Eternal Salvation.

Oh consider it is a thing of the most serious concernment in the world, how we carry ourselves under the Gospel, and with what dispositions and affections of Heart and Soul, seasons of Grace are entertained; this being taken into the consideration to make it weight, that we are the nearer to Heaven or to Hell, to Salvation or Damnation, by every Ordinance we sit under: Boast not therefore of Priviledges enjoy'd, with neglect of the important duties thereby required. Remember Capernaum's *case and tremble: As many go to Heaven by the very gates of Hell, so more go to Hell by the gates of Heaven, in that the number of them that profess Christ, is greater than the number of them that truly close with Christ.* Mar. 11. 13.

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Gospel hath proselyted many of you into a Profession; but I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true close with the Lord Christ for Salvation. (I beseech you bear with my jealousie, for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious Souls.) Most Men are good Christians in the verdict of their opinion; but you know the Law alloweth no Man to be a witness in his own case, because their affection usually out-acteth Conscience, and self-love balketh truth for its own interest.

The heart of Man is the greatest Impostor and Cheat in the world; God himself adjusts it. Jer. 17. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things. *Some of the deceits thereof you will find discovered in this* Treatise, *which sheweth you, that every Grace hath its counterfeit, and that the highest Profession may be where true Conversion is not.* הלב מנלעק Supplantativum. Cor ira omni.

The design hereof is not to break the bruised Reed, nor to quench the smoaking Flax: *Not to discourage the weakest Believer, but to awaken formal Professors. I would not sad the hearts of any,* whom God would not have made sad; *though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous*

eſtate and condition of a profeſſing Hypocrite, but that the weak Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned in the diſcovery. And therefore as I Preached a Sermon on Sincerity among you; for the ſupport and encouragement of ſuch, at the end of this; ſo I did purpoſe to have Printed it with this. But who can be Maſter of his own purpoſes, that is as I am, under ſuch daily variety of Providence? your kindly acceptation of this, will make me a debtor for that.

The Dedication hereof belongs to you on a double account, for as it had not been Preached, but that love to your Souls cauſed it; ſo it had much leſs been Printed, but that your importunate deſire procured it; And therefore what entertainment ſoever it findeth in the World, yet I hope I may expect you will welcome it, eſpecially conſidering it was born under your Roof, and therefore hopes to find favour in your Eyes, and room in your Hearts.

Accept it I beſeech you, as a publick acknowledgement of the Engagement which your great, (and I think I may ſay) unparallel'd Reſpects have laid me under, which I can no way compenſate, but by my Prayers; and if you will take them for ſatisfaction, I do promiſe to be your Remembrancer at the Throne of Grace, whilſt I am,

Matthew Mead.

To

To the Reader.

READER,

I Know how cuſtomary it is for Men to aſcend the publick Stage, with premiſed Apologies for the weakneſs and unworthineſs of their Labours, which is an argument that their deſires (either for the ſake of others profit, or their own credit, or both) are ſtretched beyond the tedder of their abilities; and that they covet to commend themſelves to the World's cenſure, in a better dreſs than common infirmity will allow; for my own part, I may truly ſay with *Gideon*, *Behold my Thouſand is the meaneſt*, (my Talent is the ſmalleſt) *and I am the leaſt in my Father's Houſe*; and therefore this appearance in Publick is not the fruit of my own choice, which would rather have been in ſome other ſubject, wherein I ſtand in ſome ſenſe indebted to the World; or elſe in ſomewhat more digeſted and poſſibly better fitted for common acceptation; but this is but to conſult the intereſt of a Man's own name, which in matters of this concern, is no better than a *ſowing to the fleſh*, and the harveſt of ſuch a Seed-time will be *in corruption*.

אלפי דרל

Judg. 6. 15.

Gal. 6. 8.

Thou haſt here one of the ſaddeſt conſiderations imaginable preſented to thee, and that is, How far it is poſſible a Man may go in a Profeſſion of Religion, and yet after all fall ſhort of Salvation: How far he may run, and yet not *ſo run as to obtain*: This, I ſay, is ſad, but not ſo ſad as true; for our Lord Chriſt doth plainly atteſt it; *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*

1 *Cor.* 9. 14.

Luk. 13. 24.

My deſign herein is, that the formal, ſleepy

Profeſſor may be awakened, and the cloſe Hypocrite diſcovered; but my fear is, that weak Believers may be hereby diſcouraged; for as it is hard to ſhew how low a Child of God may fall into ſin, and yet have true grace, but that the ſinner will be apt thereupon to preſume; ſo it is as hard to ſhew how high an Hypocrite may riſe in a Profeſſion, and yet have no grace, but that the Believer will be apt thereupon to deſpond. The prevention whereof I have carefully endeavoured, by ſhewing, that though a Man may go thus far, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*; yet a Man may fall ſhort of this, and be a true *Chriſtian* notwithſtanding; judge not therefore thy ſtate by any one *Character* thou findeſt laid down of a falſe Profeſſor, but read the whole, and then make a Judgment: For I have cared, as not to give *Childrens bread to Dogs*, ſo not to uſe the *Dogs whip* to ſcare the *Children*; yet I could wiſh, that this *Book* might fall into the hands of ſuch only whom it chiefly concerns, who *have a name to live and yet are dead*; being buſie with the *form of Godlineſs*, but ſtrangers to the *power of it*. Theſe are the proper ſubjects of this Treatiſe: And the Lord follow it with his bleſſing where-ever it comes, that it may be an awakening word to all ſuch, and eſpecially to the generation of profligate Profeſſors (with which this Age abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, talk out a few prayers, and at a good time receive the *Sacrament*, think they do enough for Heaven, and hereupon judge their condition ſafe, and their Salvation ſure; though there be a Hell of ſin in their hearts, *and the poiſon of Aſps is under their lips*, their minds being as yet carnal and unconverted,

Mat. 17. 26.

Rev. 3. 11
2 *Tim.* 3. 5.

Rom. 3. 13

and

and their Converſations filthy and unſanctified: If Eternal life be of ſo eaſie attainment and to be had at ſo cheap a rate, why did our *Lord Chriſt* tell us, *ſtrait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* And why ſhould the Apoſtle perplex us with ſuch a needleſs injunction, *To give diligence to make our Calling and Election ſure?* certainly therefore it is no ſuch eaſie thing to be ſaved, as many make it; and that thou wilt ſee plainly in the following Diſcourſe: I have been ſomewhat ſhort in the application of it; and therefore let me here be thy Remembrancer in five important duties.

Mat. 7.14

2 Pet. 1. 10.

Firſt, *Take heed of reſting in a form of Godlineſs*, as if duties *ex opere operato* could confer grace; a lifeleſs formality is advanced to a very high eſteem in the world, as a *Kab of Dove's dung* was ſold in the famine of *Samaria* at a very dear rate. Alas! the profeſſion of Godlineſs is but a ſandy foundation, to build the hope of an immortal Soul upon for Eternity; remember the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* called him a fooliſh builder, *that founded his houſe upon the ſand*, and the ſad event proved him ſo, *for it fell, and great was the fall of it*; Oh therefore lay thy foundation by Faith upon the Rock *Chriſt Jeſus*; look to Chriſt through all, and reſt upon Chriſt in all.

2 Kings 6. 25.

Mat. 7. 26.

Verſe. 27.

1 Cor. 3. 12.

Secondly, *Labour to ſee an excellency in the power of Godlineſs*, a Beauty in the life of Chriſt; If the means of grace have a lovelineſs in them, ſurely grace it ſelf hath much more; for *finis dat amabilitatem mediis*, the goodneſs of its means lies in its ſuitableneſs and ſerviceableneſs to the end; the form of godlineſs hath no goodneſs in it, any farther than it ſteads and becomes uſeful to the Soul

in the Power and practice of Godlineſs. The life of Holineſs is the only excellent life, it is the life of Saints and Angels in Heaven; yea, it is the life of God in himſelf. As it is a great proof of the baſeneſs and filthineſs of Sin, that Sinners ſeek to cover it; ſo it is a great proof of the excellency of godlineſs, that ſo many pretend to it; The very Hypocrite's fair profeſſion pleads the Cauſe of Religion, although the Hypocrite is then really worſt, when he is ſeemingly beſt.

Malus ubi bonum ſe ſimulat, nunc eſt peſſimus.

Thirdly, *Look upon things to come as the greateſt realities*; for *non entis & non apparentis idem eſt affectus*; things that are not believed, work no more upon the affections than if they had no being; and this is the grand reaſon why the generality of Men ſuffer their affections to lacquey after the World, ſetting the Creature in the place of God in their hearts.

Moſt Men judge of the reality of things by their viſibility and proximity to Sence; and therefore the choice of that wretched Cardinal becomes their Option, who would not leave his part in *Paris*, for his part in *Paradiſe*: ſure whatever his intereſt might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter: Well may coveteouſneſs be called Idolatry, when it thus chooſes the World for its God.

Col. 3. 5.

Mat. 9. 44.

Oh! conſider, Eternity is no Dream; Hell and the Worm that never dies, is no melancholy conceit; Heaven is no feigned *Elyſium*: There is the greateſt reality imaginable in theſe things; though they are ſpiritual, and out of the ken of ſenſe, yet they are real, and within the view of Faith! *Look not therefore at the things which are ſeen, but look at the things which are not ſeen; for the things*

2. *Cor.* 4. 18.

that

that are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen, are Eternal.

Fourthly, *Set a high rate upon thy Soul*, what we lightly prize, we eaſily part with; many Men ſell their Souls (at the rate of prophane *Eſau's* Birth right) *for a morſel of Bread*, nay *for that which* in the ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt *is not bread.* O conſider, thy Soul is the moſt precious and invaluable Jewel in the World, it is σοφῶ τέκνον & καλὸν ποικιλμὰ, the moſt beautiful peice of God's workmanſhip in the whole Creation; it is that which bears the Image of God, and which was bought with the Blood of the Son of God; and ſhall we not ſet a value upon it, and count it precious. *Heb.* 12. 16. *Iſa.* 55. 2.

The Apoſtle *Peter* ſpeaks of three very precious things. 1 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19.

viz. { *A Precious Chriſt*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 7. / *Precious Promiſes*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. / *And Precious Faith.* and 1. 1.

Now the *preciouſneſs* of all theſe lies in their uſefulneſs to the Soul, Chriſt is *precious*, as being the Redeemer of precious Souls; The Promiſes are *precious*, as making over this *precious Chriſt* to *precious Souls*: *Faith is precious*, as bringing a *precious Soul* to cloſe with a *precious Chriſt*, as he is held forth in the *precious Promiſes.* Oh take heed that thou art not found *over valuing* other things, and *undervaluing* thy Soul; ſhall thy fleſh, nay thy Beaſt, be loved, and ſhall thy Soul be ſlighted? Wilt thou cloath and pamper thy Body, and yet take no care of thy Soul? this is as if a Man ſhould feed his Dog, and ſtarve his Child. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for Meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them.* Oh let not a tottering periſhing carkaſs have all your time and care, as if the Life and Salva- 1 *Cor.* 6. 13.

tion

tion of thy Soul were not worth the while.

Laſtly, *Meditate much of the ſtrictneſs and ſuddenneſs of that Judgment-day, which thou and I muſt paſs through into an everlaſting ſtate,* wherein God the impartial Judge will require an account at our hands, of all our Talents and Betruſtments; we muſt then account for Time, how we have ſpent that; for Eſtate, how we have imployed that; for Strength, how we have laid out that; for Afflictions and Mercies, how they have been improved; for the Relations we ſtood in here, how they have been diſcharged; and for ſeaſons and means of Grace, how they have been husbanded; and look how *we have ſowed here, we ſhall reap hereafter.*

Gal. 6. 7.

Reader; Theſe are things that of all other deſerve moſt of, and call loudeſt for our utmoſt care and endeavour, though (by the moſt) leaſt minded: To conſider what a ſpirit of Atheiſm (if we may judge the Tree by the fruits, and the Principle by the practice) the hearts of moſt men are filled with, who live, as if God were not to be ſerved, nor Chriſt to be ſought, nor luſt to be mortified, nor ſelf to be denied, nor the Scripture to be believed, nor the Judgment-day to be minded, nor Hell to be feared, nor Heaven to be deſired, nor the Soul to be valued; but give themſelves up to worſe than a brutiſh ſenſuality, *to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, living without God in the World: This is a meditation fit enough to break our hearts, if at leaſt we were of holy *David's* temper, who *beheld the tranſgreſſors and was grieved*, and had *Rivers of waters running down his eyes, becauſe men kept not God's Laws*, The preventing and correcting of this Soul-deſtroying Diſtemper, is not the leaſt deſign

Mat. 7. 19. 20.

Eph. 4 19. & 2. 12.

Pſa. 119. 158. *Verſe.* 139.

ſign of this Treatiſe now put into thy hand, though the chief virtue of this Receit lies in its Soveraign uſe to aſſwage and cure the ſwelling Tympany of Hypocriſie; yet it may ſerve alſo (with God's Bleſſing) as a Plaiſter for the Plague-ſore of Prophaneneſs, if timely applyed by ſerious Meditation, and carefully kept on by conſtant Prayer.

Reader, Expect nothing of curioſity or quaintneſs, for then I ſhall deceive thee; but if thou would'ſt have a *touch-ſtone* for the trial of thy ſtate, poſſibly this may ſtead thee. If thou art either a ſtranger to a profeſſion, or an Hypocrite under a profeſſion, then read and tremble, for thou art the man here pointed at.

———*Mutato nomine de te*
Fabula narratur——— *Horat.*

But if the Kingdom of God be come with power into thy Soul; if Chriſt be formed in thee; if thy heart be upright and ſincere with God; then read and rejoyce. *Mat.* 9. 1. *Luk.* 17. 21.

I fear I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of an Epiſtle; the Mighty God, whoſe Prerogative it is to teach to profit, whether by the tongue, or the pen; by ſpeaking, or writing; bleſs this Tract, that it may be to thee, as a Cloud of Rain to the dry ground, dropping fatneſs to thy Soul, that ſo thy Fleece being watered with the *dew of Heaven*, thou mayeſt *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saivour Jeſus Chriſt.* In whom I am thy *Iſa.* 48. 17. 2 *Pet.* 3. 18.

Friend and Servant

London Octob. 22. 1661. *Matthew Mead.*

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ACTS

ACTS XXVI. 28.

—Ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι.

Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

IN this Chapter you have the Apoſtle *Paul*'s Apology, and defenſative Plea, which he makes for himſelf againſt thoſe blind *Jews* which did ſo maliciouſly proſecute him before *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, *Bernice*, and the Council.

In which Plea he doth chiefly inſiſt upon three things:

The manner of his Life before Converſion.

The manner of his Converſion.

The manner of his Life after Converſion.

How he lived before Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 4. to 13.

How God wrought on him to Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 13. to 18.

How he lived after Converſion, he tells you from *verſe* 19. to 23.

Before Converſion he was very Phariſaical.

The manner of his Converſion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his Converſion was very remarkable.

Before Converſion he perſecuted the Goſpel which others preached: after Converſion he preached the Goſpel which himſelf had perſecuted.

While

While he was a Perſecutor of the Goſpel the *Jews* loved him; but now that (by the Grace of God) he was become a Preacher of the Goſpel, now the *Jews* hate him, and ſought to kill him. *Ver.* 21.

He was once againſt Chriſt, and then many were for him; but now that he was for Chriſt all were againſt him; his being an Enemy to *Jeſus*, made others his friends; but when he came to own *Jeſus*, then they became his Enemies. *Ver.* 9.

And this was the great Charge they had againſt him, that of a great Oppoſer, he was become a great Profeſſor.

Hic vir invidit mihi gratiam Chriſti.

Becauſe God had changed him, therefore this enraged them: As if they would be the worſe, becauſe God had made him better: God had wrought on him by Grace, and they ſeem to envy him the Grace of God.

He Preached no Treaſon, nor ſowed no Sedition; only he preached Repentance, and Faith in Chriſt, and the Reſurrection, and for this he was called in queſtion.

This is the Breviate and Sum of *Paul*'s defence and Plea for himſelf, which you find in the ſequel of the Chapter, had a different effect upon his Judge.

Feſtus ſeems to cenſure him *ver.* 24.

Agrippa ſeems to be convinced by him, *ver.* 28.

The whole Bench ſeems to acquit him, *ver.* 30, 31.

Feſtus, he thinks *Paul* was beſide himſelf.

Agrippa, he is almoſt perſwaded to be ſuch a one as himſelf.

Dei ſapientia mundo eſt inſania, Malc. in loc.

Feſtus thinks him mad, becauſe he did not underſtand the Doctrine of Chriſt, and the Reſurrection: *Much Learning hath made thee mad.*

Agrippa

Agrippa, he is so affected with his Plea, that he is almost wrought into his Principle: *Paul* pleads so effectual for his Religion, that *Agrippa* seems to be upon the turning point to his Profession.

Then Agrippa said to *Paul*, *almost thou perswaded me to be a Christian.*

Almost] ἐν ὀλίγῳ, so the Greek; the words make some debate among the Learned. I shall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Valla*, *Simplicius*, *Beza*, *Erasmus*, and others. I take the words as we read them, and they shew what an efficacy *Paul*'s Doctrine had upon *Agrippa*'s Conscience. Tho he would not be Converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his Conscience was touched, though his Heart was not renewed.

There is that in Religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the Conscience of ungodly men. Observ.

Thou perswadest me] πείθεις, the word is from the Hebrew פתה, and it signifies both *suadere* and *persuadere*, either to use Arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the Arguments used.

Now it is to be taken in the latter sence here, to shew the influence of *Saul's* Argument upon *Agrippa*, which had almost proselyted him to the Profession of Christianity,

Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.

A Christian] χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

I hope I need not tell you what a Christian is, though I am perswaded many that are called *Christians*, do not know what a Christian is, or if they do, yet they don't know what it is to be a Christian

Putat homo se fanaticum. Mer. in loc.

Suadere est conantis, persuadere est efficientis, Beza.

Suadet qui consulit, persuadet, qui quod vult, indicit homini, Eras.

A Christian is a Disciple of *Jesus Christ*; one that believes in and follows Christ: as one that embraces the Doctrine of *Arminius* is called an *Arminian*; and as he that owns the Doctrine and way of *Luther*, is call'd a *Lutheran*; so he that embraces, and owns, and follows the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, he is called a Christian.

The Word is taken more largely, and more strictly; more largely, and so all that profess Christ come in the flesh, are called Christians, in opposition to *Heathens* that do not know Christ; and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Christ; and to the *Mahometan*, that preters *Mahomet* above Christ.

But now in Scripture, the word is of a more strict aud narrow acceptation, it is used only to denominate the true Disciples and followers of Christ, *Acts* 11. 26. *The Disciples were first called Christians at* Antioch, 1 *Pet.* 4 16. *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*, that is, as a Member, and Disciple of Christ, and so in the Text, *Almost thou perswaded me to be a Christian*

The word is used but in these three places (as I find) in all the New Testament, and in each of them it signifies in the sense aforementioned.

Fulk. *Not. on Rhem. Test.* The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do usually abuse the word Christian to signifie a fool.

But if as the Apostle saith, *the preaching of Christ* is to the World *foolishness*, then it is no wonder that the Disciples of Christ are to the world *fools*.

1 *Cor.* 1. 18.

Yet it is true (in a sound sense) that so they are: For the whole of Godliness is a Mystery,

1 *Tim.* 3. 16.

A Man must *die*, that would *live*; he must be

be *empty*, that would be *full*; he must be *lost*, that would be *found*; he must *have nothing*, that would *have all things*; he must be *blind*, that would have *Illumination*; he must be *condemned*, that would have *Redemption*; so he must be a *Fool*, that would be a *Christian*. *If any man among you seems to be wise, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise.* 1 Cor. 4. 10.

He is the true Christian, that is the World's Fool, but wise to Salvation.

Thus you have the sense and meaning of the Words briefly explained.

The Text needs no division, and yet it is pity the *almost* should not be divided from *Christian*.

Though it is of little avail to divide them as they are linked in the Text, unless I could divide them as they are united in your hearts; this would be a blessed division, if the *almost* might be taken from the *Christian*; that so you may not be only ὀλίγῳ but ἐκπόλλῳ not only *propemodum*, but *admodum*, not only *almost*, but altogether *Christians*.

This is God's work to effect it; but it is our duty to perswade to it; and O that God would help me to manage this Subject so, that you may say in the Conclusion, Thou perswadest me (not almost, but) altogether to be a Christian.

The Observation that I shall propound to handle, is this:

There are very many in the world, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians; many that are near Heaven, and yet are ne'er the nearer; many that are within a little of Salvation, and yet shall never enjoy the least Salvation; they are within sight of Heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God. Doct.

There are two sad expressions in Scripture, which I cannot but take notice of in this place.

The one concerning the truly Righteous.

The other is concerning the seemingly Righteous.

Μόλις σωζεται, It is said of the truly Righteous he shall *scarcely be saved*, and it is said of the seemingly righteous, He shall be *almost saved Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mark 12, 24.

The Righteous shall be saved with a *scarcely*, that is, through much difficulty; he shall go to Heaven through many sad fears of Hell.

Quod vix fit, fit; quod fere fit, not fit. The Hypocrite shall be saved with an *almost*; that is, he shall go to Hell through many fair hopes of Heaven.

There are two things arise from hence of very serious Meditation.

The one is, how oft a Believer may miscarry, how low he may fall and yet have true Grace.

The other is, how far an Hypocrite may go in the way to *Heaven*, how high he may attain, and yet have no Grace.

The Saint may be cast down very near to Hell, and yet shall never come there; and the Hypocrite may be lifted up very near to Heaven, and yet never come there.

The Saint may almost perish, and yet be saved eternally; the Hypocrite may almost be saved, and yet perish finally.

For the Saint at worst is really a Believer, and the Hypocrite at best is really a Sinner.

Before I handle the *Doctrine*, I must promise three things which are of great use for the establishing of weak Believers, that they may not be shaken and discouraged by this Doctrine.

First,

First, There is nothing in the Doctrine that should be matter of stumbling or discouragement to weak Christians.

The Gospel doth not speak these things to wound Believers: but to awaken sinners and formal Professors.

As there are none more averse than weak Believers, to apply the Promise and Comforts of the Gospel to themselves, for whom they are properly designed: So there are none more ready than they to apply the threats and severest things of the Word to themselves, for whom they were never intended.

As to the Disciples, when Christ told them, *One of you shall betray me*, they that were innocent suspected themselves most, and therefore cry out, *Master is it I?* *Mat.* 26. 16.

So weak Christians when they hear Sinners reproved, or the Hypocrite laid open in the Ministry of the Word, they presently cry out, *Is it I?*.

It is the Hypocrite's fault to sit under the tryals and discoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them.

And it is the weak Christian's fault to draw sad conclusions of their own state from premises which nothing concerns them.

There is indeed great use of such Doctrine as this is to all Believers.

1. To make them look to their standing, upon what bottom they are, and to see that the foundation of their hope be well laid, that they build not upon the Sand, but upon a Rock. *Mat.* 7. 24, 26.

2. It helps to raise our admiration of the distinguishing love of God, in bringing us into the way everlasting, when so many perish from the way; and in over-powering our *Psa.* 139. 14.

Souls into a true Conversion, when so many take up with a graceless Profession.

2 *Cor.* 13. 5. 3. It incites to that excellent Duty of Heart-searching, that so we approve our selves to God in sincerity.

4. It engages the Soul in double diligence, that it may be found not only believing, but persevering in Faith to the end.

These Duties (and such as these are) make this Doctrine of use to all Believers; but they ought not to make use of it as a stumbling-block in the way of their peace and comfort.

My design in Preaching on this Subject, is not to make sad the Souls of those whom Christ will not have made sad; I would bring water, not to *quench the Flax that is smoaking,* but to put out that false fire that is of the Sinners *own kindling,* lest walking all his Days by the light thereof, he shall at last *lie down in sorrow.*

Mat. 12. 20.

Isa. 50. 1.

My aim is, to level the Mountain of the Sinner's Confidence, not to weaken the Hand of the Believers Faith and Dependance; to awaken and bring in secure formal sinners, not to discourage weak Believers.

Secondly, I would premise this; tho' many may go far (very far) in the way to Heaven, and yet fall short; yet that Soul that hath the least true grace, shall never fall short. *The Righteous shall hold on his way.*

Job 7. 9.

Tho' some may do very much in a way of Duty (as I shall shew hereafter) and yet miscarry; yet that Soul that doth Duty with the least sincerity, shall never miscarry. *For he saveth the upright in heart.*

The least measure of true Grace is as saving as the greatest; it saves as surely, though not so comfortably. The least Grace gives a full

full Intereſt in the Blood of Chriſt, whereby we are throughly purged; and it gives a full Intereſt in the ſtrength and power of Chriſt, whereby we ſhall be certainly preſerved.

Chriſt keeps Faith in the Soul, and Faith keeps the Soul in Chriſt: and ſo *we are kept by the Power of God, through Faith to Salvation.* 1 *Pet.* 1. 5.

Thirdly, I would premiſe this, They that can hear ſuch truths as this, without ſerious reflexions, and ſelf-examination, I muſt ſuſpect the goodneſs of their condition.

You'll ſuſpect that Man to be next door to a Bankrupt, that never caſts up his ſhop, nor looks over his Books; and I as verily think that Man an Hypocrite, that never ſearches nor deals with his own Heart.

He that goes on in a road of Duties without any rub or doubting of his ſtate, I doubt no Man's State more than his.

When we ſee a Man ſick, and yet not ſenſible, we conclude the tokens of Death are upon him.

So when Sinners have no ſenſe of their ſpiritual condition, it is plain that they are dead in ſin; the tokens of Eternal Death are upon them.

Theſe things being premiſed (which I deſire you would carry along in your mind, while we travel through this Subject) I come to ſpeak to the Propoſition more diſtinctly and cloſely.

That there are very many in the World that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians. Doct.

I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition, and then proceed to a more diſtinct Proſecution.

1. I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition; and I ſhall do it by Scripture

ture evidence, which ſpeaks plain and fully to the caſe.

1. The young Man in the Goſpel is an eminent proof of this Truth, in *Mat.* 19. 16, to 23. There you read of one that came to Chriſt to learn of him the way to Heaven; *Good Maſter,* *Verſ.* 16. *what good thing ſhall I do, that I may have Eternal Life?*

Our Lord Chriſt tells him, *If thou wilt enter* *Verſ.* 17. *into life, keep the Commandments*; and when Chriſt tells him which, he anſwers, *Lord, all theſe* *Verſ.* 20. *have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?*

Now do but ſee how far this Man went.

1. *He obeyed.*] He did not only hear the Commands of God, but he kept them; now the Scripture ſaith, *Bleſſed is he that hears the* *Luc* 11. 8. *word of* God, *and keeps it.*

2. *He obeyed univerſally*;] not this or that Command, but both this, and that; he did not halve it with God, or pick and chuſe which were eaſieſt to be done, and leave the reſt: No but he obeys all; *All theſe things have I kept.*

3. *He obeyed conſtantly*; not in a fit of zeal only, but in a continued Series of Duty; his *Hoſ.* 6. 4. goodneſs was not (as *Ephraim's*) *like the morning dew that paſſes away*; no; *All theſe things have I kept from my youth up.*

4. *He profeſſeth his deſire to know and no more,*] *to perfect that which was lacking of his obedience*; and therefore he goes to Chriſt to inſtruct him in his Duty; *Maſter, what lack I yet?* Now would you not think this a good Man? alas! how few go thus far?

And yet as far as he went, he went not far enough; *he was almoſt, and yet but almoſt a Chriſtian*; for he was an unſound Hypocrite; *Verſ.* 21. he forſakes Chriſt at laſt, and cleaves to his Luſt.

This

This then is a full Proof of the Truth of the Doctrine.

A ſecond Proof of it, is that of the Parable of the Virgins, *Mat.* 25. 1. and ſo on.

See what a Progreſs they make, how far they go on in a Profeſſion of Chriſt. *Pſ.* 4[illegible]

1. *They are called Virgins*] Now this is a Name given in the Scripture, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, to the Saints of Chriſt, *Cant.* 1. 3. *The Virgins love thee:* So *Rev.* 14. 4. The one hundred forty and four thouſand that ſtood with the Lamb on Mount *Sion*, are called *Virgins*. They are called *Virgins*, becauſe they are not defiled with the *Corruptions that are in the World through Luſt.* 2 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3. 2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

Now theſe here ſeem to be of that ſort, for they are called *Virgins*. *Mat.* 25. 1.

2. *They take their Lamps*] That is, they make a Profeſſion of Chriſt. *Verſe* 3.

3. *They had ſome kind of Oyl in their Lamps*] as appears, *ver.* 8. they had ſome Convictions, and ſome Faith; (* though not the Faith of God's Elect) to keep their Profeſſion alive, to keep the Lamp burning. * *Hi ſunt non quæ-leſcunque animæ, ſed tales quæ habent Catholicam Fidem, & habere videntur bona Opera in Eccleſia Dei.* Aug. de Serm. Dom. Ser. 13. Ver. 1. Cant. 1. 7.

4. *They went;*] Their Profeſſion was not an idle Profeſſion, they did perform Duties, frequent Ordinances, and do many things commanded; they make a Progreſs, *They went.*

5. *They went forth.*] They went, and out went, they left many behind them; this ſpeaks out their ſeparation from the World.

6. *They went with the Wiſe Virgins.*] They joyn'd themſelves to thoſe who had joyn'd themſelves to the Lord, and were Companions of them.

them that were the Companions of Chriſt.

7. *They go forth to meet the Bridegroom.*) This ſpeaks out their owning and ſeeking after Chriſt.

8. When they heard the cry of the Bridegroom coming, *They aroſe and trimmed their Lamps*; they profeſs Chriſt more highly, hoping now to go in with the Bridegroom. *Verſe 7.*

9. *They ſought for the true Grace.*) Now don't we ſay, the deſires of Grace are Grace? And ſo they are, if true and timely, if ſound and ſeaſonable.

Why lo here a deſire of Grace in theſe Virgins; *give us of your Oyl.*

It was a deſire of true Grace, but it was not a true deſire of Grace; it was not true, becauſe not timely; unſound, as being unſeaſonable; it was too late.

Their folly was not in taking Oyl, when they took their Lamps; their time of ſeeking Grace was when they came to Chriſt, it was too late to ſeek it when Chriſt came to them. They ſhould have ſought for that when they took up their Profeſſion; it was too late to ſeek it at the coming of the Bridegroom. *Verſe 8.*

And therefore *they were ſhut out*; and tho' they cry for entrance, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, yet the Lord Chriſt tells them, *I know you not.* *Verſe 10.* *Verſe 11.* *Verſe 12.*

You ſee how far theſe Virgins go in a Profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and how long they continue in it, even 'till the Bridegroom came; they go to the very doors of Heaven, and there (like the *Sodomites*) periſh with their hands upon the very threſhold of Glory.

They were *almoſt Chriſtians*, and yet but *almoſt*; almoſt ſaved, and yet periſh.

You that are Profeſſors of the Goſpel of Chriſt,

Chriſt, ſtand and tremble, if they that have gone beyond us fall ſhort of Heaven, what ſhall become of us that fall ſhort of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profeſs Chriſt, that have ſome Faith in their Profeſſion, (ſuch as it is) that have ſome fruit in their Faith, that out-ſtrip others that ſeek Chriſt, that improve their Profeſſion, and ſuit themſelves to their Profeſſion, nay, that ſeek Grace; if ſuch as theſe be but *almoſt Chriſtians*, Lord, what are we?

If theſe two Witneſſes be not ſufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the Propoſition,

Take a third; and that ſhall be from the Old Teſtament. *Iſa.* 58. 2. See what God ſaith of that People; he gives them a very high Character for a choice People, one would think.

They ſeek me daily they delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, and forſook not the Ordinance of their God; *they ask of me the Ordinance of Juſtice; they take delight in approaching to* God.

See how far theſe went; if God had not ſaid, they were rotten, and unſound, we ſhould have took them for the *He-goates before the Flock*, and ranked them among the Worthies. *Jer.* 50. 8
Pray obſerve;

1. *They ſeek God.*] Now this is the proper Character of a true Saint, to ſeek God. True Saints are called Seekers of God: *This is the Generation of them that ſeek him; that ſeek thy Face, O Jacob!* or, O G O D of *Jacob.* *Pſa.* 24. 6

Lo, here a Generation of them that ſeek God; and are not theſe the Saints of God? nay farther,

2. *They seek him daily.*] Here's diligence backed with continuance, יום יום *day by day*, that is, every day, from day to day. They did not seek him by fits and girds, nor in a time of trouble and affliction only as many do.

Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer when thy chastening was upon them, Isa. 26. 16. Many when God visits them, then they visit him, but not till then; when God poureth out his afflictions, then they pour out their Supplications. This is Sea-Man's Devotion; when the storms have brought them to *their wit's end, then they cry to the Lord in their trouble*, Psal. 107. 27, 28. Many never cry to God, till they are at their wit's end; they never come to God for help, so long as they can help themselves. *Jon.* 1. 5.

But now these here whom God speaks of are more zealous in their *Devotion*; the others make a vertue of necessity, but these seem to make conscience of Duty; for saith God, *they seek me daily.*

Sure this is (one would think) a note of Sincerity. *Job.* 27. 10.

Job saith of the Hypocrite, *Will he always call upon God?* Surely no; but now this people call upon God always, *They seek him daily*; certainly these are no Hypocrites.

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my ways.* Sure this frees them from the suspicion of hypocrisie; for *Job.* 21. 14. *They say unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

4. They are *as a Nation that did Righteousness.*] Not only as a Nation that spake Righteousness, or knew Righteousness, or professed Righteousness; but as a Nation that did

did Righteouſneſs, that practiſed nothing but what was juſt and right. They appeared to the Judgment of the World as good as the beſt.

5. *They forſook not the Ordinances of their God.*] They ſeem true to their Principles, conſtant to their Profeſſion, better than many among us, that caſt off Duties; and forſake the Ordinances of God; but theſe hold out in their Profeſſion, *They forſook not the Ordinances of God.*

6. *They ask of me* (ſaith God) *the Ordinances of Juſtice.*] They will not make their own Will the Rule of Right and Wrong, but the Law and Will of God; and therefore in all their Dealings with Men, they deſire to be guided and counſelled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of Juſtice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God.*] Sure this can't be the guize of an Hypocrite; *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* (ſaith *Job*) No, he will not. *Job* 27. 10.

Tho God is the chief delight of Man, (having every thing in him to render him lovely, as was ſaid of *Titus Veſpatian*) yet the Hypocrite will not delight in God. *Delicia humani generis.*

'Till the Affections are made Spiritual, there is no Affection to things that are Spiritual. God is a Spiritual Good, and therefore Hypocrites cannot delight in God. But theſe are a People that delight in approaching to God. *Hypocrita neque Deum neque divina habet in deliciis.*

8. They were a People that were much in Faſting, as you may ſee, *ver.* 3. *Wherefore have we faſted* (ſay they) *and thou ſeeſt not?* Now this is a Duty that doth not ſuppoſe and require Truth of Grace only in the Heart, but ſtrength of Grace.

No Man (ſaith our Lord Chriſt) *puts new Wine* *Matth.* 9. 17.

Wine into Old bottles, leaſt the bottels break, and the Wine run out.

New Wine is ſtrong, and old bottles weak; and the ſtrong Wine breaks the weak Veſſels: This is a Reaſon Chriſt gives, why his Diſciples who were newly converted (and but weak as yet) were not exerciſed with this auſtere Diſcipline.

Aſſemb. Annot. upon the Place.

But this People here mentioned, were a People that *faſted* often, *afflicted their Souls* much, wore themſelves out by frequent Practices of Humiliation.

Sure therefore this was *new Wine in new Bottles*; this muſt needs be a *People* ſtrong in Grace; here ſeems to be Grace, not only in Truth, but alſo in Growth: And yet for all this, they were no better than a Generation of Hypocrites; they made a goodly Progreſs, and went far, but yet they went not far enough; they were caſt off by God after all. I hope by this time the Truth of the Point is ſufficiently avouched and confirmed; *That a man may be* (yea very many are) *almoſt, and yet* (no more than) *but almoſt Chriſtians.*

Now for a more diſtinct Proſecution of the Points.

1. *I ſhall ſhew you the ſtep, by ſtep, how far a man may go, what attainments he may reach unto, how ſpecious and ſingular a Progreſs he may make in Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian when all is done.*

2. *I will ſhew you whence it is, that many men go ſo far as they are almoſt Chriſtians.*

3. *Why they are but almoſt Chriſtians when they have gon thus far.*

4. *What the reaſon is, why men that go thus far as to be almoſt Chriſtians, yet go no farther than to be almoſt Chriſtians.*

1. *How*

1. *How far a may a man go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?* Queſt.

This I ſhall ſhew you in twenty ſeveral ſteps. *Anſw.*

1. *A man may have much knowledge, much light, he may know much of God and his Will, much of Chriſt and his Ways*, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

For though there can be no Grace without Knowledge, yet there may be much Knowledge where there is no Grace: Illumination often goes before, when Converſion never follows after. The Subject of Knowledge is the Underſtanding, the Subject of Holineſs is the Will. Now a man may have his Underſtanding enlightened, and yet his Will not at all ſanctified. He may have an Underſtanding to know God, and yet want a Will to obey God. The Apoſtle tells us of ſome that *when they knew* God, *yet they glorified him not as* God. Rom. 1. 21.

To make a man altogether a Chriſtian, there muſt be light in the *Head*, and heat in the *Heart*, knowledge in the *Underſtanding* and zeal in the *Affection*.

Some have zeal and no knowledge, that is blind Devotion; ſome have knowledge and no zeal, that is fruitleſs Speculation; but where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Chriſtian.

But is it not ſaid, *This is the Life Eternal, to know thee the only True God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent?* Joh. 17. 3. Object.

It is not every knowledge of God and Chriſt that intereſts the Soul in Life Eternal: For why then do the Deviles periſh? They have more knowledge of God than all the men in the World; for though by their Fall they loſt their Holineſs, yet they loſt not their Knowledge. *Anſw.*

They

They are called Δαίμονες from their Knowledge, and yet they are Διάβολοι from their Malice, Devils still.

Knowledge may fill the Head, but it will never better the Heart, if there be not somewhat else. The *Pharisees* had much Knowledge; *Rom.* 2. 17, 18. *Behold, Thou art called a Jew, and restest in the Law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his Will,* &c. and yet they were a Generation of Hypocrites.

Sinite Sapientes hujus mundi sapienter descendere ad Infernum.

Alas! How many have gone loaded with Knowledge to Hell?

Though it is true, that it is Life Eternal to know God and Jesus Christ, yet it is as true, that many do know God, and Jesus Christ, that shall never see Life Eternal.

There is, you must know, a twofold Knowledge; the one is common, but not saving; the other is not common, but saving: Common Knowledge is that which floats in the Head, but doth not influence nor affect the Heart. This Knowledge Reprobates may have: Balaam *Num.* 23. 10. *saw Christ from the top of the Rocks, and from the Hills.*

Naturalists say, That there is a Pearl in the Toad's Head, and yet her Belly is full of Poyson. The *French* have a Berry which they call *vve de spine*, the Grape of a Thorn.

The common Knowledge of Christ is the Pearl in the Toad's Head: The Grape that grows upon Thorns, it may be found in Men unsanctified.

And then there is a saving Knowledge of God and Christ, which doth include the assent of the Mind, and consent of the Will, this is a Knowledge that implies Faith; *Isa.* 53. 11. *By his Knowledge shall my Righteous Servant justifie many.*

And this is that Knowledge which leads

to

to Life Eternal: Now whatever that meaſure of Knowledge is, which a Man may have of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, yet if it be not this ſaving Knowledge, Knowledge joyned with affection and application, he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

He only knows God aright, who knows how to obey him, and obey according to his knowledge of him; *A good underſtanding have all they that do his Commandments.* *Pſal.* 111. 10.

All knowledge without this, makes a Man but like *Nebuchadnezzar's* Image, with a *Head of Gold, and Feet of Clay.*

Some know, but to know.

Some know, to be known.

Some know, to practiſe what they know.

Now to know, but to know, that's curioſity.

To know, to be known, that's vain glory.

But to know, to practiſe what we know, that is Goſpel-duty.

This makes a Man a compleat Chriſtian; the other without this makes a Man *almoſt*, and yet but *almoſt* a Chriſtian.

2. *A Man may have great and eminent gifts, yea ſpiritual gifts*, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. The Gift of Prayer is a ſpiritual Gift; now this a Man may have, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian; for the Gift of Prayer is one thing, the Grace of Prayer is another. *1 Cor.* 12. 10.

The Gift of Preaching and Propheſying is a ſpiritual Gift, now this a Man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian. Judas* was a great Preacher, ſo were they that came to Chriſt, and ſaid, *Lord, Lord, we have propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils*, &c. *Matt.* 7. 22.

You muſt know, that it is not Gifts but Grace

grace, which makes a Christian: For,

1. Gifts are from a common work of the Spirit, now a man may partake of the common gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a Reprobate; for therefore they are called common, because they are indifferently dispensed by the Spirit to good and bad; to them that are Believers, and to them that are not.

They that have grace have gifts; and they that have no grace may have the same gifts; for the Spirit works in both; nay, in this sence, he that hath no grace, may be under a greater work of the Spirit (*quoad hoc*) as to this thing, than he that hath most grace; a graceless professor may have greater gifts than the most Holy Believer: He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them; but they in sincerity and integrity outgo him.

Eph. 4. 12. *Dona dantur in adjutorium gratiæ.*

2. Gifts are for the use and good of others, they are given *in ordine ad alium*, as the School-men speak, for the profiting and edifying of others: so says the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 12. 7. *They are given to profit withall.*

The Raven was an unclean Bird. God makes use of her to feed Elijah; tho' she was not good meat, yet it was good meat she brought.

Now a man may edifie another by his Gifts, and yet he unedified himself: he may be profitable to another, and yet unprofitable to himself.

A lame man may with his Crutch point to thee the right way, and not be able to walk in it himself: A crooked Taylor, may make a Suite to fit a streight body though it fit not him that made it, because of his crookedness.

The Church (Christ's Garden enclosed) may be watered through a wooden gutter, the Sun may give light through a fluttish

window, and the Field may be well ſowed with a dirty hand.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the Authority of him that ſpeaks it, but upon the Authority of the God that bleſſes it. So that another may be converted by my Preaching, and yet I may be a *caſt-away* notwithſtanding. *Balaam* makes a clear and rare Propheſie of Chriſt, and yet he hath no benefit by Chriſt; *There ſhall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre ſhall riſe out of* Iſrael; but yet *Balaam* ſhall have no benefit by it: *I ſhall ſee him, but not now; I ſhall behold him, but not nigh*, Numb. 4. 17. 1 *Cor.* 9. 27.

God may uſe a Man's Gifts to bring another unto Chriſt, when he himſelf, whoſe Gifts God uſes, may be a Stranger unto Chriſt: One Man may confirm another in the Faith, and yet himſelf may be a ſtranger unto the Faith. *Pendleton* ſtrengthens and confirms *Sanders*, in the Queen *Mary*'s days, to ſtand in the Truth he hath Preached, and to ſeal it with his Blood, and yet afterwards plays the Apoſtate himſelf. *Acts and Mon. laſt Edit.* 3. *v.* p. 141.

Scultetus tells us of one *Johannes Speiſerus* a famous Preacher of *Ausborough* in *Germany*, in the year 1523, who Preached the Goſpel ſo powerfully, that divers common *Harlots* were converted, and became good Chriſtians, and yet himſelf afterwards turned Papiſt, and came to a miſerable end. *Scultet. Annal.* p. 111.

Thus the Candle may burn bright to light others in their Work, and yet afterwards go out in a ſtink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greateſt Gifts to change the heart; a Man may Preach like an Apoſtle, pray like an Angel, and yet may have the Heart of a Devil. It is

is Grace only that can change the heart; the greatest Gifts can't change it; but the least Grace can; Gifts may make a Man a Scholar, but Grace makes a Man a Believer.

Now if Gifts can't change the heart, then a Man may have the greatest Gifts; and yet be but *Almost a Christian.*

4. Many have gone loaden with Gifts to Hell; no doubt *Judas* had great Gifts, for he was a Preacher of the Gospel; and our Lord Jesus Christ would not set him in the work, and not fit him for the work; yet *Judas is gone to his own place*; the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were Men of great Gifts, and yet, *Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe?*

1 *Cor.* 1. 20. & 1. 18. *The Preaching of the Cross, is to them that perish, foolishness.*

Them that perish, who are they? who? the wise and learned, both among *Jews* and *Greeks*; these are called *them that perish. Surgunt indocti & rapiunt Cœlum, dum nos cum doctrina nostra in Gehennam detrudimur*, said a great Bishop when he saw a poor Shepherd weeping over a Toad. The poor illiterate World attain to Heaven, while we with all our learning fall into Hell.

There are three things must be done for us, if ever we would avoid perishing.

We must be throughly convinced of sin.

We must be really united to Christ.

We must be instated in the Covenant of Grace.

Now the greatest Gifts cannot stead us in any one of these.

They cannot work thorough Convictions.

They cannot effect our Union.

They cannot bring us into Covenant-Relation.

And consequently, they cannot preserve from

from eternal perishing; and if so, then a Man may have the greatest *Gifts*, and yet be but almost a Christian. *John* 4.14.

5. Gifts may decay and perish: They do not lye beyond the reach of Corruption; indeed Grace shall never perish, but Gifts will; Grace is incorruptible, though Gifts are not; Grace is *a Spring, whose waters fail not*, but the streams of Gifts may be dryed up. If Grace be corruptible in its own *nature*, as being but a Creature; yet it is incorruptible in regard of its conserver, as being the new creature; he that did create it in us, will conserve it in us; he that did begin it, will also finish it. *Isa.* 58. 11. *Heb.* 12.2.

Gifts have their Root in Nature, but Grace hath its Root in Christ; and therefore tho' Gifts may dye and wither, yet Grace shall abide for ever.

Now if Gifts are perishing, then (though he that hath the *least Grace* is a Christian, yet) he that hath the greatest *gifts* may be but almost a Christian.

But doth not the Apostle bid us, *covet earnestly the best gifts?* 1 Cor. 12. 31. Why must we covet them, and covet them earnestly, if they avail not to Salvation? *Object.*

Gifts are good, though they are not the best good; they are excellent, but there is somewhat more excellent; so it follows in the same verse; *yet I shew unto you a more excellent way*, and that is the way of Grace; one dram of Grace is more worth than a Talent of Gifts: Gifts may make us rich towards Men, but it is Grace that makes us *rich towards Gods*. *Ans.* *Luke* 12. 21.

Our Gifts profit other, but Grace profits our selves; that whereby I profit another is good, but that whereby I am profited my self is better.

Now

Now becauſe Gifts are good, therefore we ought to covet them; but becauſe they are not the beſt good, therefore we ought not to reſt in them: we muſt covet gifts for the good of others, that they may be edifyed; and we muſt covet Grace for the good of our own Souls, that they may be ſaved; for whoſoever be bettered by our Gifts, yet we ſhall miſcarry without Grace.

A Man may have a high profeſſion of Religion, be much in external duties of Godlineſs, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. Mark what our Lord Chriſt tells them in *Mat.* 7. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, not every one that makes a Profeſſion of Chriſt, ſhall therefore be owned for a true
Rom. 9. 6. Diſciple of Chriſt, *all are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael*; nor are all Chriſtians that make a Profeſſion of Religion.

What a goodly Profeſſion had *Judas*! he followed Chriſt, left all for Chriſt, he Preached the Goſpel of Chriſt, he caſt out Devils in the name of Chriſt, he eat and drank at the Table of Chriſt, and yet *Judas* was but an Hypocrite.

Moſt Profeſſors are like Lillies, fair in ſhew, but foul in ſcent; or like Pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the ſtomach. The fineſt Lace may be upon the coarſeſt Cloath.

It is a great deceit to meaſure the ſubſtance of our Religion by the bulk of our Profeſſion, and to judge of the ſtrength of our Graces by the length of our Duties. The Scripture ſpeaks of ſome, who having
2 *Tim.* 3. 5. *A form of Godlineſs, yet deny the Power thereof*; Deny the power, that is, they don't live in the practiſe of thoſe Graces which they pre-

tend

tend to in their duties; he that pretends to godlineſs by a ſpecious Profeſſion, and yet doth not practiſe godlineſs by a holy Converſation, *he hath a form, but denies the power.*

Hugo compares ſuch to the Oſtrich, *qui alas habet, ſed non volat*, which hath great Wings, but yet flies not; many have the wings of a fair profeſſion, but yet uſe them not to mount upward in ſpiritual affection, and a Heavenly Converſation. *Loquitur hic ut Piſo, vivit ut Gallonius.*

But to clear the truth of this. That a Man may make a high profeſſion of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian; take a fourfold evidence.

1. If a Man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate better'd, then he may be a great Profeſſor, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

But a Man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate renewed.

He may be a conſtant hearer of the word, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; he may come often to the Lord's Table, and yet go away a ſinner as he came; we muſt not think that duties, *ex opere operato*, can confer Grace.

Many a Soul hath been converted by Chriſt in an Ordinance, but never was any Soul converted by an Ordinance without Chriſt.

And doth Chriſt convert all that ſit under the Ordinances? ſurely no, for to ſome, *the word is a ſavour of Death unto Death.* 1 *Cor.* 2. 16.

And if ſo, then it is plain, that a Man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

2. A Man may profeſs Religion, and live in a form of Godlineſs in Hypocriſie, *Iſa.* 48. 1. *Hear ye this, O houſe of* Jacob, *which*

are

are called by the Name of Israel, and are come forth out of the Waters of Judah, which sweat by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in Righteousness. What do you think of these? *They make mention of the name of the Lord.* there is there Profession; *but not in truth nor in Righteousness*, there is their dissimulation; and indeed there could be no Hypocrisie in a religious sence, were it not for a Profession of Religion: for he that is wicked and carnal, and vile inwardly, and appears to be so outwardly, he is no Hypocrite, but is what he appears, and appears what he is.

Hypocrita cupit videri justus.

But he that is one thing really, and another thing seemingly, is carnal and unholy, and yet seems to be good and holy, he is an Hypocrite,

Toilet instit. Sacr. l 8. c. 9.

Thus the *Casuists* define Hypocrisie to be *Simulatio Sanctitatis*, a counterfeiting of holiness; and this fits exactly with the *Greek* word ὑπόκρισις which is from ὑποκρίνομαι to counterfeit.

פנים חנפים from the root חנף

And to this purpose the Hebrews have two words for Hypocrites, *Panim* which signifies *facies*, and *Chanipn* which signifies *Counterfeits*, from *Chanapn*, to dissemble; so that he is an Hypocrite that dissembles Religion, and weareth the face of Holiness, and yet is without the Grace of Holiness; he appears to be in semblance, what he is not in substance; he wears a form of Godliness without, only as a cover of a Prophane heart within.

He hath a *Profession* that he may not be thought wicked; but it is but a *Profession*, and therefore he is wicked.

He is the Religious Hypocrite; *Righteous*, because he pretends to it; and yet an Hypocrite.

pocrite, becauſe he doth but pretend to it; he is like many men in a Conſumption, that have freſh looks, and yet rotten Lungs; or like an Apple that hath a Skin fair, but a rotten Coar: many appear Righteous, who are only Righteous in appearance.

And if ſo, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

3. Cuſtome and Faſhion may create a man a Profeſſor; as you have many that wear this or that Garb, not becauſe it keeps them warmer, or hath any excellency in it more than another, but meerly for Faſhion.

Many muſt have powdered Hair, ſpotted Faces, Feathers in their Caps, *&c.* for no other end, but becauſe they would be Fools in Faſhion.

So, many profeſs Chriſtianity, not becauſe the means of Grace warms the Heart, or that they ſee any Excellency in the Ways of God above the World, but meerly to follow the Faſhion: I wiſh I might not ſay, it hath been true of our days, becauſe Religion hath been uppermoſt, therefore many have profeſſed; it hath been the gaining Trade, and then moſt will be of that Trade.

Religion in Credit makes many Profeſſors, but few Proſelytes; but when Religion ſuffers, then its Confeſſors are no more than its Converts; for Cuſtom makes the former, but Conſcience the latter.

He that is a Profeſſor of Religion merely for Cuſtom-ſake, when it proſpers, will never be a Martyre for Chriſt's ſake, when Religion ſuffers.

He that owns the Truth, to live upon that, will diſown it when it comes to live upon him.

They ſay, that when a Houſe is decaying and

and falling, all the Rats and Mice will forſake it; while the houſe is firm, and they may ſhelter in the roof, they'll ſtay, but no longer, leſt in their decay, the fall ſhould be upon them, and they that lived at the top ſhould lye at bottom.

My Brethren, may I not ſay we have many that are the Vermine, the Rats and Mice of Religion, that would live under the roof of it, while they might have ſhelter in it; but when it ſuffers, forſake it, leſt it ſhould fall, and the fall ſhould be upon them. I am perſwaded this is not the leaſt Reaſon, why God hath brought the wheel upon the profeſſion of Religion, *viz.* to rid it of the Vermine.

He ſhakes the foundation of the houſe, that theſe Rats and Mice may quit the Roof; not to overthrow it, but to rid them out of it, as the Husbandman fans the wheat, that he may get rid of the Chaff. The Halcyon-days of the Goſpel provoke Hypocriſie, but the ſufferings for Religion prove Sincerity.

Now then, if Cuſtom and Faſhion make many men Profeſſors, then a man may profeſs Religion, *and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

4. If many may periſh under a Profeſſion of Godlineſs, then a man may profeſs Religion, *and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may periſh under the higheſt Profeſſion of Religion. *Chriſt curſed the Fig-tree that had leaves and no fruit.* It is ſaid. *Matth.* 8. 12. *That the Children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer Darkneſs.* Who were theſe but they that were then the only People of God in the World by Profeſſion, *that had made a Covenant with him by Sacrifice?* And yet theſe caſt out.

Pſ. 50. 5.

In

In *Mat.* 7. 22. you read of ſome that came and made boaſt of their Profeſſion to Chriſt, hoping that might ſave them; (ſay they) *have we not Propheſied in thy name, caſt out Devils in thy name, done many wonderful works in thy name?* *Lord Mat.* 7. 22.

Now what ſaith our Lord Chriſt to this? *Then I will profeſs unto them, I never knew you; depart from me.* *Ver.* 23.

Mark, hear are them that Propheſie in his Name, and yet periſh in his Wrath; in his Name caſt out Devils, and then are caſt out themſelves; *In his name do many wonderful works,* and yet periſh for wicked workers.

The Profeſſion of Religion will no more keep a Man from periſhing, than calling a Ship the *Safe-guard* or the *Goodſpeed*, will keep her from drowning.

As many go to Heaven with the fear of Hell in their hearts, ſo many go to Hell with the name of Chriſt in their Mouths. Now then, if many may periſh under a profeſſion of Godlineſs, then may a Man be a high Profeſſor of Religion, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

But is it not ſaid by the Lord Chriſt himſelf, *He that confeſſes me before Men, him will I confeſs before my Father in Heaven?* *Obj.* *Mat.* 10. 23.

Now for Chriſt to ſay, he will confeſs us before the Father, is equivalent to a Promiſe of Eternal Life; for if Jeſus Chriſt confeſs us, God the Father will never diſown us.

True, they that confeſs Chriſt, ſhall be confeſſed by him; and its as true, that this Confeſſion is equivalent to a Promiſe of Salvation. But now you muſt know, that profeſſing Chriſt, is not confeſſing him; for to profeſs Chriſt is one thing, to confeſs *Sol.*

Chriſt is another: Confeſſion is a living Teſtimony for Chriſt, in a time when Religion ſuffers; Profeſſion may be only a lifeleſs Formality, in a time when Religion propers. To confeſs Chriſt, is to chuſe his ways, and own them. To profeſs Chriſt, is to plead for his ways, and yet live beſides them. Profeſſion may be from a feigned love to the ways of Chriſt, but Confeſſion is from a rooted love to the Perſon of Chriſt.

To profeſs Chriſt, is to own him when none deny him; to confeſs Chriſt, is to plead for him, and ſuffer for him, when others oppoſe him; Hypocrites may be Profeſſors, but the Martyrs are the true Confeſſors: Profeſſion is a *ſwimming* down the Stream, Confeſſion is a ſwimming againſt the Stream. Now many may ſwim with the Stream (like the dead Fiſh) that cannot ſwim againſt the Stream with the living Fiſh: Many may profeſs Chriſt that can't confeſs Chriſt, and ſo, notwiſtanding their Profeſſion, yet are but *almoſt Chriſtians.*

4. To come yet nearer; *A Man may go far in oppoſing his ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* How far a Man may go in this Work, I ſhall ſhew you in ſeven gradual Inſtances.

1. A Man *may be convinced of ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian:* For,

1. Conviction may be rational, as well as ſpiritual; it may be from a natural Conſcience enlightned by the Word, without the effectual Work of the Spirit, applying ſin to the heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in ſound Converſion; ſaith the Church, *We have been with Child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth Wind.* This is the Complaint of

Iſa. 26. 8.

the

the Church in reference to the unprofitableness of their Afflictions; and it may be the complaint of most in reference to the unprofitableness of their Convictions.

3. Many take Convictions of Sin to be Conversion from Sin, and so sit down, and rest in their Convictions. That is a sad complaint God makes of *Ephraim*; *Ephraim is an unwise Son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* Now then, if Convictions may be only from natural Conscience, if they may be worn out, or may be mistaken, and rested in for Conversion, then a Man may have Convictions, and be but almost a Christian. *Hos.* 13. 13.

Secondly, *A Man may Mourn for Sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*; so did *Saul*, so did *Esau*, for the loss of his Birth-right, which was his Sin, and therefore he is called by the Spirit of God, *Prophane Esau*; yet he sought it again carefully with *tears*. *Heb.* 12. 16, 17.

But doth not Christ pronounce them blessed that Mourn? *Matth.* 5. 4. *Blessed are they that Mourn.* *Obj.*

Sure then, if a Man Mourn for Sin, he is in a good Condition: You see, saith *Nazianzen*, τῷ στεναγυῷ τὴν σωτηρίαν συνεζευγμένην, that Salvation is joyned with Sorrow. *Orat.* 17. *Greg. Na.*

I answer, It is true, that they who mourn for Sin in the sense Christ there speaks of, are blessed; but all mourning for sin, doth not therefore render us blessed. *Sol.*

1. True mourning for Sin must flow from spiritual Convictions of the evil, and vileness, and damnable nature of Sin.

Now all that mourn for Sin, don't do it from a thorough-work of spiritual Conviction upon the Soul; they have not a right sense of the evil and vileness of Sin.

2. True mourning for Sin, is more for the evil that is in Sin, than the evil that comes by Sin; more because it dishonours God, and wounds Christ, and grieves the Spirit, and makes the Soul unlike God, than because it damns the Soul.

Now there are many that mourn for Sin, not so much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for Sin in Hell, you read of *weeping and wailing there.* The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all sorrow, and no comfort; as in Heaven there is peace without trouble, joy without mourning; so in Hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing incessantly; but it is for the evil they feel by Sin, and not for the evil that is in Sin: So that a Man may mourn for Sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian*: It may ‖ grieve him to think of perishing for Sin, when it doth not grieve him that he is defiled and polluted by Sin.

Mat. 8. 12.

‖ 1 *Sam.* 24. 17. 26. 21.

Thirdly, *A Man may make large confession of Sin, to God, to others, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

† *Mat.* 27. 4.

How ingenuously doth *Saul* confess his Sin to *David*, ‖ *I have Sinned* (saith he) *thou art more righteous than I! Behold I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.*

* 1 *John* 1. 9.

So *Judas* makes a full confession, † *I have Sinned in betraying innocent Blood.*

Peccatorum confessio Synecdoche universam pœnitentiam hoc loco significat. Vorst. in loc.

Yet *Saul* and *Judas* were both rejected of God; so that a Man may confess Sin, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Obj. But is not confession of Sin, a character of a Child of God? Doth not the Apostel say, * *If we confess our Sins God is just and faithful to forgive them*? No Man was ever kept

kept out of Heaven for his confeſſed badneſs, though many are kept out of Heaven for their ſuppoſed goodneſs.

Judah, in *Hebrew* ſignifies *confeſſion*; now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Ruben*; confeſſion of ſin is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are ſome that confeſs ſin, and are ſaved; there are others that confeſs ſin and periſh.

1. Many confeſs ſin meerly out of cuſtom, and not out of Conſcience: you ſhall have many that will never Pray, but they will make a long confeſſion of ſin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their Conſciences.

2. Many will confeſs leſſer ſins, and yet conceal greater; like the Patient in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Phyſician of his finger, when his Liver was rotten.

3. Many will confeſs ſin in the general, or confeſs themſelves ſinners; and yet ſee little, and ſay leſs of their particular ſins, an implicite confeſſion (as one ſaith) is almoſt as bad as an implicite faith.

Where confeſſion is right, it will be diſtinct, eſpecially of thoſe ſins that were our chief ſins.

So *David confeſſes his Blood-guiltineſs and Adultery*; So *Paul his Blaſphemy, Perſecution, and Injury againſt the Saints*. It is bad to hear men confeſs they are great Sinners, and yet can't confeſs their ſins. *Pſal.* 51. 4, 14. *1 Tim.* 1. 13, 19.

Though the leaſt ſin be too bad to be committed, yet there is no ſin too bad to be confeſſed.

4. Many will confeſs ſin, but it is only under extremity, that is, not free and voluntary. *Pharaoh* confeſſes his ſin, but it was when Judgment compelled him.

I have ſinned againſt the Lord, (ſaith he,) but *Exod.* 10. 16.

but it was when he had eight Plagues upon him.

Many do by their Sins, as Mariners do by their Goods, caſt them out in a ſtorm, wiſhing for them again in a calm. Confeſſion ſhould come like Water out of a Spring, which runs freely, not like Water out of a Still, which is forced by Fire,

5. Many confeſs their Sin, but with no intent to forſake *Sin*; they confeſs the Sins they have committed, but don't leave the Sins they have confeſſed.

Many men uſe Confeſſion as *Lewis* the Eleaventh of *France* did his Crucifix; he would ſwear an Oath, and then kiſs it, and ſwear again, and then, kiſs it again.

So many ſin, and then confeſs they do not well, but yet never ſtrive to do better.

Mr. *Torſhel* tells a ſtory of a Miniſter he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confeſs it very lamentingly; and yet he was no ſooner out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again; and this would he do as conſtantly as men follow their Trades.

Now then, if a man may confeſs Sin meerly out of cuſtom; if he may confeſs leſſer Sins, and yet conceal greater; if he may confeſs Sin only in the General, or only under extremity; or if he may confeſs Sin without any intent to forſake Sin, then ſurely a man may confeſs Sin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Fourthly, *A man man forſake Sin and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* He may leave his Luſt, and his wicked ways which he ſometimes lived in, and in the Judgment of the World become a new Man, and yet not be a new Creature. *Simon Magus*, when he hears

Philip

Philip preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his Sorcery and Witchcraft, and believes. *Act.* 8. 13.

But you'll ſay, this ſeems contrary to Scripture; for that ſayes, *He that confeſſeth, and forſaketh ſin, ſhall have mercy*: But I confeſs ſin; yea, not only ſo, but alſo I forſake ſin; ſure therefore his Mercy is my Portion, it belongs to me. *Objection* *Pro.* 28. 13.

It is true, that where the Soul forſakes ſin from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end; where he forſakes ſin, as ſin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his Nature:

This declares that Soul to be right with God, and the Promiſe ſhall be made good to it, *He ſhall find mercy.*

But now pray mind, there is a forſaking ſin that is not right but unſound.

1. Open ſins may be deſerted, and yet ſecret ſins may be retained; now this is not a right forſaking; ſuch a Soul ſhall never find mercy. A Man may be cured of a Wound in his fleſh, and yet may dye of an Impoſtume in his Bowels.

2. A Man may forſake ſin, but not as ſin; for he that forſakes ſin as ſin, forſakes all ſin; *a quatenus ad omne valet conſequentia*; it is impoſſible for a man to forſake ſin as ſin, unleſs he forſakes all that he knows to be ſin.

3. A Man may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter; as a man that goes to Sea, would willingly ſave all his goods; but if the ſtorm ariſes that he cannot, then he throws ſome over-bord to lighten the Veſſel, and ſave the reſt. So did they, *Acts* 27. 38.

So the ſinner chuſeth to keep all his ſins

but if a ſtorm ariſes in his Conſcience, why then, he will heave one Luſt over-board to ſave the Life of another.

4. A Man may let all ſin go, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; for there is the root of all ſin in the Heart, tho' the fruit be not ſeen in the Life; the Tree lives tho' the Boughs be lopt off.

As a Man is a ſinner before ever he acts ſin; ſo (till Grace renew him) he is a ſinner though he leaves ſin; for there is original ſin in him enough to damn and deſtroy him.

Pſal. 51.5. 5. Sin may be left and yet be loved; a Man may forſake the life of ſin, and yet retain the Love of ſin; now though leaving ſin makes him almoſt a Chriſtian, yet loving ſin, ſhews he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

It is a leſs evil to do ſin, and not to love it, than to love ſin and not to do it; for to do ſin, may argue only weakneſs of Grace, but to love ſin, argues ſtrength of *Luſt*. *What I hate that do I,* Rom. 7. 15.

Sin is bad in any part of a Man, but ſin in the Affection is worſe than ſin in the Converſation; for ſin in the Converſation may be only from infirmity, but ſin in the Affection is the Fruit of Choice and Unregeneracy.

6. All Sin may be chained; and yet the Heart not changed: and ſo the Nature of the ſinner is the ſame as ever.

A Dog chained up is a Dog ſtill, as much as if he was let looſe to devour.

There may be a Ceſſation of Arms between Enemies, and yet the Quarrel may remain on foot ſtill; there may be making Truce, where there is no making Peace.

A Sinner may lay the Weapons of ſin out of his Hand, and yet the Enmity againſt God ſtill remain in his Heart.

There

There may be a truce, he may not ſin againſt him, but there can be no Peace, till he be united unto him.

Reſtraining grace holds in the ſinner, but it is renewing Grace that changes the Nature. Now many are held in by grace from being open ſinners, that are not renewed by Grace and made true Believers.

Now then, If a man may forſake open ſins, and retain ſecret ſins; if he may forſake ſin, but not as ſin, if he may let one ſin go, to hold another the faſter; if a man may let all ſin go, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; if ſin may be left, and yet be loved: Finally, if all ſin may be chained, and yet the Heart not changed; then a man may forſake ſin, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Fifthly *A man may hate ſin and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Abſolam* hated *Amnon*'s Uncleanneſs with his Siſter *Thamar*, yea, his hatred was ſo great, that he ſlew him for it; and yet *Abſalom* was but a wicked man. 2 *Samuel* 13. 12. 28.

But the Scripture makes it a ſign of a gracious Heart to hate Sin; yea, though a man do through infirmity fall into Sin; yet if he hates it, this is a proofe of Grace. *Paul* proves the ſincerity of his Heart, and the truth of his Grace, by his hatred of Sin, though he committed it, *Rom.* 7. 15. *What I hate that do I.* *Objection.*

Nay, what is Grace, but *conformitas cum Archetypo*, a conformity of the Soul to God, to love as God loves, to hate as God hates: Now God hates Sin, it is one part of his Holineſs to hate all Sin.

And if I hate Sin, then I am conformed to God; and if I am conformed to God, then am I altogether a Chriſtian.

It is true, that there is a hatred of Sin, which is a ſign of Grace, and which flows from a principle of Grace, and is Grace. As for inſtance.

To hate Sin as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majeſty; to hate Sin as it is a breach of the Command, and ſo a wicked controling God's Will, which is the only Rule of goodneſs; to hate Sin, as being a deſingenuous tranſgreſſion of that Law of Love eſtabliſhed in the Blood and Death of Chriſt, and ſo in a degree a *Crucifying of Chriſt afreſh.*

To hate Sin as being a grieving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all Sin in its nature is.

Thus to hate Sin is Grace, and thus every true Chriſtian hates Sin.

But though every Man that hath Grace, hates Sin, yet every Man that hates Sin, hath not Grace; For,

A Man may hate Sin from other principles, not as it is a wrong to God, or a wounding *Chriſt*, or a grieving the Spirit, for then he would hate Sin; for there is no Sin but hath this in the nature of it. But,

1. A Man may hate Sin for the ſhame that attends it, more than for the evil that is in it. Some Sinners there are, who declare their *Sin as* Sodom, *and hide it not.* They are ſet down in the *ſeat of the ſcornful, they glory in their ſhame,* Phil. 3. 19. But now others there are who are aſhamed of Sin, and therefore hate it, not for the Sin's ſake, but for the ſhame's ſake. This made *Abſolom* hate *Ammon's* Uncleanneſs, becauſe it brought ſhame upon him and his Siſter.

Pſal. 1. 1.

2. A Man may hate Sin more in others than

than in himſelf: So doth the Drunkard, he hates Drunkenneſs in another, and yet practices it himſelf: The Lyar hates falſhood in another, but likes it in himſelf. Now he that hates Sin from a principle of Grace, hates ſin moſt in himſelf; he hates ſin in others, but he loaths moſt the ſins of his own heart.

3. A man may hate one ſin, as being contrary to another. There is a great contrariety between Sin and Sin, between Luſt and Luſt: It is the excellency of the life of Grace, that it is an uniform life; there is no one Grace contrary to another; the Graces of God's Spirit are different, but not differing; Faith, and Love, and Holineſs, are all one; they conſiſt together at the ſame time, in the ſame ſubject; nay they can't be parted; there can be no faith without love, no love without holineſs; and ſo on the other hand, no holineſs without love, no love without faith. So that this makes the life of Grace an eaſie an excellent life; but now the life of Sin is a diſtracting contradictious life, wherein a man is a Servant to contrary Luſts: the Luſt of Pride and Prodigality, is contrary to the Luſt of Covetouſneſs *&c.* *Tit. 3. 3.*

Now when one Luſt gets to be the Maſter-Luſt in the Soul, then that works a hatred of its contrary; where Covetouſneſs gets the Heart, there the Heart hates Pride; and where Pride gets uppermoſt in the Heart, there the Heart hates Coveteouſneſs. Thus a man may hate ſin not from a Principle of Grace, but from the contrariety of Luſt.

He don't hate any ſin as it is ſin, but he hates it, as being contrary to his beloved ſin.

Now then, if a man may hate ſin for the ſhame

ſhame that attends it; if he may hate Sin more in others, than in himſelf: and if he may hate one ſin, as being contrary to another, then he may hate Sin, and yet be but *Almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Sixthly, *A Man may make great vows and promiſes, he may have ſtrong purpoſes and reſolutions againſt Sin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Thus did *Saul*, he promiſes and reſolves againſt his Sin, *Return my Son David*, (ſaith he,) *for I will no more do thee harm.* What promiſes and reſolves did *Pharaoh* make againſt that Sin in detaining God's people? (Saith he) *I will let the People go, that they may do Sacrifice to the Lord.* (And again) *I will let you go, and ye ſhall ſtay no longer*, Exod. 9. 28. And yet *Saul* and *Pharaoh* both periſhed in their Sins: the greateſt purpoſes and promiſes againſt Sin, will not make a Man a Chriſtian: For,

1 *Sam.* 26. 21.

Exod. 8.

1. Purpoſes and promiſes againſt Sin, never hurt Sin: We ſay, *threatned folk live long*; and truly ſo do threatned Sins. It is not new purpoſes but a new nature, that muſt help us againſt Sin: Purpoſes may bring to the birth, but without a new Nature, *there is no ſtrength to bring forth.* The new Nature is the beſt ſoil for holy purpoſes to grow in; otherwiſe they wither and dye, like Plants in an improper ſoil.

2. Troubles and Afflictions may provoke us to large purpoſes and promiſes againſt Sin for the future; what more common than to vow, and not to pay; to make vows in the day of trouble, which we make no Conſcience to pay in the day of peace? Many Covenant againſt Sin, when Trouble is upon them; and then ſin againſt their Covenant, when it is removed from them.

It was a brave Rule that *Pliny* in one of his Epiſtles gave his Friend to live by, *Ut tales eſſe perſeveremus ſani, quales nos futuros eſſe profitemur infirmi*; *That we ſhould continue to be ſuch when we are well, as we promiſe to be when we are ſick.*

Many are our ſick-bed Promiſes, but we are no ſooner well, but we grow ſick of our Promiſes.

3. Purpoſes and Reſolves againſt Sin for the future, may be only a Temptation to put off Repentance for the preſent; Satan may put a man on to good purpoſes, to keep him from preſent attempts,

He knows, whatever we purpoſe, yet the ſtrength of performance is not in our ſelves.

He knows, that purpoſes for the future, are a putting God off for the preſent; they are a ſecret *will not*, to a preſent opportunity. That is a notable paſſage, *Luke.* 9. 59. *Follow me*, (ſaith Chriſt, to the two men) Now ſee what Anſwers they gave to Chriſt, *Suffer me firſt to go and bury my Father*, (ſays one;) This man purpoſes to follow Chriſt, only he would ſtay to bury his Father: (ſays the other,) *Lord I will follow thee, but let me firſt go and bid them farewel, which are at my houſe*, ver. 61. I will follow thee, but only I would firſt go and take my leave of my Friends, or ſet my Houſe in Order; and yet we do not find that ever they followed Chriſt, notwithſtanding their fair purpoſes.

4. Nature unſanctified may be ſo far wrought on, as to make great promiſes and purpoſes againſt Sin.

1. A Natural Man may have great Convictions of ſin from the Workings of an Enlightned Conſcience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. He

3. He may have a deſire to be ſaved.

Now theſe three together; The working of Conſcience, the ſight of the goodneſs of the Law; a deſire to be ſaved, may bring forth in a man great purpoſes againſt Sin, and yet he may have no heart to perform his own purpoſes. This was much what the Caſe of them *Deut.* 5. ſay they to *Moſes* verſe 27. *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay; and tell thou it to us, and we will hear it, and do it.*

This is a fair Promiſe, and ſo God takes it, *verſe* 28. *I have heard the words of this people, they have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken.* So ſaid, and ſo done, had been well, but it was better ſaid than done; for though they had a tongue to promiſe, yet they had no heart to perform. and this God ſaw; therefore ſaid he, *ver.* 29. *O that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments always, that it might be well with them!*

They promiſe to fear God, and keep his Commandments, but they wanted a new heart to perform what an unſanctified heart had promiſed: It fares with men it this caſe, as it did with the Son in the Goſpel, that ſaid, *He would go into the Vineyard, but went not.* *Mat.* 21. 30.

Now then if purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; if preſent afflictions may draw out our large *Promiſes*, if they may be the fruit of a *Temptation*, or if from nature unſanctified; ſurely then a man may promiſe and purpoſe much againſt ſin, and yet be but *Almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Seventhly, *A man may maintain a Strife and Combate againſt ſin in himſelf, and yet be but Almoſt a Chriſtian:* So did *Balaam* when

when he went to Curſe the People of God he had a great ſtrife within himſelf; *How ſhall I Curſe* (ſaith he) *where God hath not Curſed? Or how ſhall I defie whom the Lord hath not defied?* Num. 23. 8.

And did not *Pilate* ſtrive againſt his Sin, when he ſaid to the *Jews, ſhall I crucifie your King? What evil hath he done? I am Innocent of the blood of this juſt man.* Mark 15. 12, 14. Mat. 37. 24.

But you will ſay, *Is not this an argument of grace, when there is a ſtriving in the Soul againſt Sin? for what ſhould oppoſe ſin in the, heart but grace?* The Apoſtle makes *the luſting of the Fleſh againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt tthe Fleſh,* to be an argument of grace in the heart. Now I find this ſtrife in my heart; though the remainders of corruption ſometimes break out into actual ſins, yet I find a ſtriving in my Soul againſt ſin. Object. Gal. 5. 17.

It is true, there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is only from grace, and is proper to believers; and there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not believers. *Sol*

There is a ſtrife againſt Sin in one and the ſame faculty; the will againſt the will; the affection againſt the affection, and this is that which the Apoſtle calls *the luſting of the Fleſh againſt the Spirit*; that is, the ſtriving of the unregenerate part againſt the regenerate; and this is ever in the faculty, and is proper to Believers only.

An unbeliever never finds this ſtrife in himſelf; this ſtrife cannot be in him, it is impoſſible (as ſuch) that is while he is on this ſide a ſtate of Grace.

But then there is a ſtriving againſt ſin in divers faculties, and this is the ſtrife that is in

in them that are not Believers, there the ſtrife is between the will and the Conſcience; Conſcience enlightned and terrified with the fear of Hell and Damnation, that is againſt ſin; the will and affection (not being renewed) they are for Sin. And this cauſes great tuggings and ſtrong combates many times in the ſinner's heart.

Video meliora proboque, deteriora ſequor.

Thus it was with the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*; Conſcience convinced them of the Divinity of Chriſt, and of the truth of his being the Son of God, and yet a perverſe will, and carnal affections, cry out, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him.*

Conſcience pleaded for him, he had a witneſs in their Boſoms, and yet their wills were bent againſt him; and therefore they are ſaid *to have reſiſted the Spirit:* viz. the workings and convictions of the Spirit, in their Conſciences, *Acts* 7. 51. And this is the caſe of many ſinners. When will and affections are for ſin, and plead for it, Conſcience is againſt it, and many times frights the Soul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which oppoſeth ſin in them, to be grace, when it is only the work of a natural Conſcience; they conclude the ſtrife is between Grace and Sin, the regenerate and unregenerate part, when alas! it is no other than the contention of a natural Conſcience againſt a corrupt will and affections.

And if ſo, then a man may have great ſtrifes and combates againſt ſin in him; and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

5. *A man may deſire grace and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; ſo did the *five fooliſh Virgins*, Mat. 25. 8. *Give us of your Oyl*; what was that but true Grace? it was that Oyl that lighted

lighted the wiſe Virgins into the Bridegroom's Chamber.

They do not only deſire to enter in, but they deſire Oyl to light them in; wicked Men may deſire Heaven, deſire a Chriſt to ſave them; there is none ſo wicked upon Earth, but deſire to be happy in Heaven.

But now here are they that deſire Grace as well as Glory; and yet theſe are but *Almoſt Chriſtians.*

But is it not commonly taught, that *deſires of Grace are Grace?* Nay doth not our Lord Chriſt himſelf make it ſo? *Bleſſed are they that Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs for they ſhall be filled.* Object. Mat. 5. 6.

It is true, that there are ſome deſires of Grace, which are Grace: As, Sol.

1. When a Man deſires Grace from a right ſenſe of his Natural ſtate, when he ſees the vileneſs of ſin, and the woful defiled and loathſome condition he is in, by reaſon of ſin: and therefore deſires the Grace of Chriſt to renew and change him; This is Grace. This ſome make to be the loweſt degree of ſaving Faith.

2. When a Man joyns proportionable endeavours to his deſires; doth not only wiſh for Grace, but work for Grace, ſuch deſires are Grace.

3. When a Man's deſires are conſtant and unceſſant, that ceaſe not but in the attainment of their Object; ſuch deſires are true Grace: They are a part of the Eſpecial Work of the Spirit. They do really partake of the Nature of Grace; now it is a known Maxime. *Quicquid participat de Natura totius, eſt pars totius: That which partakes of the Nature of the whole, is a part of the whole*; the filings of Gold are Gold.

The

The Sea is not more really Water than the least drop; the Flame is not more really Fire, than the least spark; for these do *participate de natura totius.*

But though all true desires of Grace are Grace; yet all desires of Grace are not true; For,

1. A man may desire Grace, but not for it self, but for somewhat else; not Grace for Grace's sake, but for Heaven's sake; he don't desire Grace, that his Nature may be changed, his Heart renewed, the Image of God stampt upon him, and his Lusts subdued in him.

These are Blessed desires found only in True Believers. The true Christian only can desire Grace for Grace's sake; but the almost Christian may desire Grace for Heaven's sake.

2. A Man may desire Grace without proportionable endeavours after Grace; many are good at wishing, bad at working; like him that lay on the Grass on a Summer's day, crying out, *O si esset laborare*! O that this were to work!

Virtutum exoptant contabescuntque relicta. Pers.

Solomon saith, *The desire of the slothful kills him*: How so? *For his hands refuse to labour, Prov.* 21 25. He perisheth in his desires.

The Believer joins desires and endeavours together; *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after*, Psal. 27. 4.

Impii non curant quærere quem tamen desiderant invenire, cupientes

3. A Man's desire of Grace may be unseasonable: Thus the *foolish Virgins* desired Oyl when it was too late.

The Believer's desires are seasonable; he desires Grace in the season of Grace, and seeks in a time when it may be found.

consequi, sed non & sequi Ber. Eccl 8. 5.

The

The wiſe man's heart knows both time and Judgment. He knows his ſeaſon, and hath wiſdom to improve it.

The ſilly Sinner doth all his works out of ſeaſon; he ſins away the ſeaſons of grace, and then deſires grace when the ſeaſon is over; the ſinner doth all too late, as *Eſau* deſired the bleſſing when it was too late, and therefore he loſt it; whereas had he come ſooner, he had obtained it. *Sero ſapiunt Phryges.*

Moſt men are like *Ephimetheus*, wiſe too late, they come when the Market is done: when God had ſhut in his ſhop, then they have their Oyl to get.

When they lye upon their death-beds, then they deſire Holy Hearts.

4. Deſires of grace in many are very unconſtant and fleeting like the *Morning dew that quickly paſſeth away*: Or like *Jonah's Gourd*, that ſprings up in a night, and withers in a night; they have no root in the Heart, and therefore quickly periſh: Now then, if a man may deſire grace, but not for grace's ſake, if deſires may be without endeavours; if a man may deſire grace when 'tis too late; if theſe deſires may be but fleeting and inconſtant, then may a Man deſire grace, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Hoſ.* 6. 4. *Jon.* 4. 6.

6. *A Man may tremble at the Word of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, as *Belſhazzar* did at the hand-writing upon the wall. *Dan.* 5. 6.

Obj. But is not that a note of ſincerity and truth of grace, to tremble at the Word? doth not God ſay, *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite Spirit, and trembles at my Words.* *Iſa.* 66. 2.

Sol. There is a two-fold trembling.

1. One is, when the Word diſcovers the guilt

guilt of ſin, and the wrath of God that belongs to that guilt; this where Conſcience is awake, cauſes trembling and amazement: thus when *Paul preached of the Righteouſneſs and Judgment*, it is ſaid *Felix Trembled.* Act. 24. 25.

2. There is a trembling which ariſes from a Holy dread and Reverence of the Majeſty of God, ſpeaking in his Word; this is only found in true Believers, and is that which keeps the Soul low in its own eyes. Therefore mark how the words run, in *Iſa.* 66. 2. *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite Spirit and trembles at my Word.*

God don't make the promiſe to him that trembles at the Word: *For the Devils believe and tremble*; the Word of God can make the proudeſt, ſtouteſt ſinner in the World to ſhake and tremble, but it is *to the poor and contrite Spirit that trembles*: Where trembling is the fruit of a ſpirit broken for ſin, and low in its own eyes, there will God look. Jam. 1. 9.

Now many tremble at the word, but not from poverty of ſpirit, not from a Heart broken for ſin, and low in its own Eyes; not from a ſenſe of the Majeſty and Holineſs of God; and therefore notwithſtanding they tremble at the Word, yet they are but *almoſt Chriſtians.*

7. *A Man may delight in the Word and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* Iſa. 58. 2. *They take delight in approaching to God.*

And it is ſaid of that ground *Mat.* 13. 20. that it *received the Word with Joy*; and yet it was but ſtony ground.

Object. But is it not made a character of a Godly Man, to delight in the word of God? doth not *David* ſay *He*; *is a Bleſſed Man that delights in the Law of the Lord?* Pſal. 1. 2. There

There is a delighting in the Word which *Sol.* ows from Grace, and is a proof of bleſſed-eſs.

1. He that delights in the Word becauſe of ſpirituality, he is a Chriſtian indeed; the ore Spiritual the Ordinances are, the more ch a Gracious Heart, delight in them.

2. When the Word comes cloſe to the Con-ience, rips up the Heart, and diſcovers ſin, d yet the Soul delights in it notwithſtanding; is is a ſign of *Grace*.

3. When delight ariſes from that Com-union that is to be had with God there: his is from a principle of Grace in the oul.

But there may be a delight in the Word here there is no Grace.

1. There are many delight in the Word, be-auſe of the Eloquence of the Preacher: they elight not ſo much in the truths delivered, s in the dreſs they are delivered in. Thus it s ſaid of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he was o them *as a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleaſant voice.* *Ezek.* 33. 32.

2. There are very many delight to hear the ord, that yet take no delight to do it; So aith God of them, in *Ezekiel* 33. 32. *They de-light to hear my words, but they do them not.* *Ezek.* 33. 32.

Now then, if a Man may delight in the word, more becauſe of the Eloquence of the Preacher, han becauſe of the Spiritualneſs of the mat-er; if he may delight to hear the word, nd yet not delight to do it: then he may delight in the Word, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

8. *A Man may be a Member of the Church of Chriſt, he may joyn himſelf to the People of God, partake with them in all Ordinances;*

and

and ſhare of all Church-priviledges, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

So the *five fooliſh Virgins* joyned themſelves to the wiſe, and walked together.

Many may be members of the Church of Chriſt, and yet not members of *Chriſt* the Head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of *Iſraël* out of *Egypt*, they joyned themſelves to the *Iſraelites*, owned their God, left their own Country, and yet in heart *Egyptians* notwithſtanding.

All are not Iſrael, that are of Iſrael, Rom. 9. 6.

The Church in all Ages hath had unſound members: *Cain* had Communion with *Abel*, *Iſhmael* dwelt in the ſame houſe with *Iſaac*, *Judas* was in fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, and ſo was *Damas* with the reſt of the Diſciples.

There will be ſome Bran in the fineſt Meal: the Draw-net of the Goſpel catches bad fiſh as well as good, the Tares and the Wheat grow together, and it will be ſo till the harveſt.

God hath a Church where there are no Members but ſuch as are true Members of Chriſt, but it is in Heaven, it is the *Church of the firſt-born*; there are no Hypocrites, nor rotten unſound Profeſſors, none but the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect*, all is pure Wheat that God layeth up in that Garner; there the Chaff is ſeparated to unquenchable fire.

Heb. 12. 23.

Mat. 3. 12.

But in the Church on Earth the Wheat and the Chaff lye in the ſame heap together, the *Samaritans* will be near of kin to the *Jews* when they are in proſperity, ſo while the Church of God flouriſheth in the World,

many

many will joyn to it; they will ſeem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*, and ſeem Saints, though yet they are no better than *Almoſt Chriſtians.*

9. *A Man may have great hopes of Heaven, great hopes of being ſaved, and yet be but Almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Indeed there is hope of Heaven, which is *the Anchor of the Soul ſure and ſtedfaſt*, it never miſcarries; and it is known by four properties. *Heb.* 6. 19.

Firſt, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out ſin, 1 *Joh* 3. 3. *He that hath this hope, purifies himſelf even as God is pure.* That ſoul that truly hopes to enjoy God, truly endeavours to be like God.

Secondly, It is a hope which fills the heart with gladneſs: *We rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God.* *Rom.* 5. 2. *Pſ.* 130. 5.

Thirdly, It is a hope that is founded upon the Promiſe: As there can be no true Faith without a Promiſe, ſo, nor any true hope: Faith applies the Promiſe, and Hope expects the fulfilling the Promiſe; Faith relies upon the Truth of it, and Hope waits for the good of it; Faith gives Intereſt, Hope expects livery and ſeiſin.

Fourthly, It is a hope that is wrought by God himſelf in the Soul; who is therefore called, *the God of hope*, as being the *Author* as well as the *Object* of Hope. Now he that hath this hope ſhall never miſcarry: This is a right hope; the hope of the true Believer, *Chriſt in you the Hope of Glory.* *Rom.* 15. 13. *Col.* 1. 27.

But then, as there is a true and ſound hope, ſo there is a falſe and rotten hope; and this is much more common, as baſtard Pearls are more frequently worn than true Pearls.

There

There is nothing more common, than to ſee Men big with groundleſs hopes of Heaven: As,

1. A Man may have great hope, that hath no grace; you read of the hope of Hypocrites, *Job* 8. 13, 14.

The Performance of duties *is a proof* of their hope; the fooliſh Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they ſhould have been ſhut out after all.

Many Profeſſors would not be at ſuch pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for Heaven. Hope is the great motive to action; deſpair cuts the Sinews of all endeavours; that is one reaſon why the damned in Hell ceaſe acting toward an alteration of their ſtate, becauſe diſpair hath taken hold of them; if there were any hope in Hell, they would up and be doing there. So that there may be great hope where there is no Grace; experience proves this, formal Profeſſors are Men of no grace, but yet Men of great hopes; nay, many times you ſhall find that none fear more about their Eternal condition, than they that have moſt cauſe of hope; and none hope more than they that have moſt cauſe of fear. An intereſt in God may ſometimes be without hope, ſo hope in God may be without Intereſt.

2. A Man may hope in the mercy, and goodneſs, and power of God, without eyeing the Promiſe, and this is the hope of moſt; God is full of Mercy and goodneſs, and therefore willing to ſave; and he is infinite in power, and therefore able to ſave; why therefore ſhould I not reſt on him?

Now it is preſumption, and therefore ſin to hope in the Mercy of God, otherwiſe than

by eyeing the Promiſe; for the Promiſe is the Channel of Mercy, the Pipe thro' which it is conveyed; all the bleſſedneſs the Saints enjoy in Heaven, is no other than what is the Fruit of the Promiſe relyed on, and hoped for here on Earth. A Man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by vertue of the Promiſe.

3. A Man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanſe his Heart, nor depart from his ſecret Sins; that hope of Salvation that is not accompanied with Heart-purification, that is a vain *Hope.*

4. A Man may hope for Heaven, and yet be doing the Work of Hell; he may hope for Salvation, and yet be working out his own Damnation, and ſo periſh in his confidences: This is the Caſe of many, *Male agendo ſperant, & ſperando pereunt*; like the Waterman that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on Heaven, whoſe Hearts are in the Earth; they hope in God, but chuſe him not for a Portion; they hope in God, but do not love him as the beſt good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to periſh without him, notwithſtanding all their hopes, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained; when God takes away his Soul?*

Now then, if a Man may have great hope of Heaven, that hath no Grace; if he may hope in mercy, without eyeing the Promiſe; if he may hope without Heart-purifying: if he may hope for Heaven, and yet do the work of Hell; ſurely then a Man may have great hopes of Heaven, and yet be but *Almoſt a Chriſtian.*

10. *A Man may be under great and viſible*

changes, and theſe wrought by the Miniſtry of the Word, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, as *Herod* was; it is ſaid when *he heard* John Baptiſt, *he did many things and heard him gladly,* *Saul* was under a great change when he met the Lord's Prophets; he turned Prophet too.

Mark 6. 20.

Nay, it is ſaid, *Ver.* 9. of that, 1 *Sam.* 10. *that God gave him another heart.*

1 *Sam.* 10. 10.

Now was not this a work of Grace? and was not *Saul* here truly converted? one would think he was, but yet indeed he was not.

For though it is ſaid, God gave him *another heart*; yet is is not ſaid, that God gave him a *new heart.*

There is a great difference between רבאכר (*lebh acher*) another heart, and רבכרש (*lebh chadaſh*) a new heart; God gave him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a Believer; another heart may make another Man, but it is a *new heart* that makes a new Man.

Again, *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth: he was under a great and viſible change: of a *Sorcerer* he was turned to be a *Believer*, he left his Witchcrafts and Sorceries, and embraced the *Goſpel*; was not this a great change?

If the Drunkard doth but leave his Drunkenneſs, the Swearer his Oaths, the Prophane Perſon his Prophaneneſs, they think this is a gracious change, and their ſtate is now good: alas, *Simon Magus* did not only leave his Sins, but had a kind of a Converſion; for he *believed and was Baptized.*

Act. 8. 13.

Obj. *But is not that Man that is changed, a true Chriſtian?*

No

Not every change makes a Man a Chriſtian; indeed there is a change, that whoever is under it, he is a true Chriſtian. *Sol.*

When a Man's heart is ſo changed, as that it is renewed: when old things *are done away, and all is become new*; when the καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature is wrought in the Soul; when a Man is *turned from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan to God*; when the mind is enlightened, the will renewed, the affections made Heavenly; then a Man is a Chriſtian indeed. 2 *Cor.* 5. 17. *Act.* 26. 18.

But now you muſt know that every change, is not this change; For,

1. There is a Civil change, a Moral change, as well as a Spiritual and ſupernatural change.

Many Men are changed in a Moral ſenſe, and one may ſay, they are become *new Men*, but they are in heart and nature the ſame Men ſtill; they are not changed in a Spiritual and ſupernatural ſenſe, and therefore it cannot be ſaid of them, they are become *new Creatures*.

Reſtraining Grace may cauſe a moral change, but it is renewing Grace that muſt cauſe a ſaving change. Now many are under reſtraining Grace, and ſo changed Morally, that are not under the power of renewing Grace, and ſo changed ſavingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward. A Man's heart can't be ſanctified, but it will influence the life; but a Man's life may be reformed, and yet never affect or influence the heart.

3. A Man may be converted from a courſe of Prophaneneſs to a form of Godlineſs;

from a filthy converſation to a fair profeſſion, and yet the heart the ſame, in one and the other. A rotten Poſt may be gilt without, and yet unſound within. *Hypocrita in verbis ſanctus, in corde venus, intus Nero, foris Cato. Audi, nemo melius; ſpecta, nemo pejus.*

Matt. 23. 25. It is common to have the out-ſide of the Cup and Platter made clean, and yet the in-ſide foul and filthy.

Now then, if a Man may be changed morally, and yet not ſpiritually; outwardly, and yet not inwardly; from a courſe of Prophaneneſs, to a lifeleſs form of Godlineſs; then a Man may be under great and viſible changes, and yet be no more than *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

I do not ſpeak this to diſcountenance any change, ſhort of that that is ſpiritual; but to awaken you to ſeek after that change which is more than moral. It is good to be outwardly reformed, but it is better to be ſavingly renewed.

I know how natural it is for Men to take up with any thing like a work of converſion, tho' it be not converſion; and reſting in that, they Eternally periſh.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no change, no converſion can ſtead your Souls in the day of Judgment, on this ſide that

1 *Theſ.* 5. 13. ſaving work, which is wrought on the Soul by the Spirit of God, renewing you throughout; the ſober Man without this change, ſhall as ſurely go to Hell, as the fooliſh drunkard.

Morality and Civility may commend us to Men, but not to God. They are of no value in the procurement of an Eternal Salvation.

A Man may go far in an outward change, and yet not be one ſtep nearer Heaven, than he that never was under any change; nay, he may be (in ſome ſenſe) further off; as Chriſt ſaith, *The Scribes and Phariſees were further from Heaven*, with all their ſhew of Godlineſs, than *Publicans* and *Harlots* in all their ſin and uncleanneſs. Becauſe reſting in a falſe work, a partial change, we neglect to ſeek after a true and ſaving change. There is nothing more common than to miſtake our ſtate, and by overweening thoughts misjudge our condition, and ſo periſh in our own deluſions. *Mat.* 21. 31.

The *World* is full of theſe *fooliſh Builders* that lay the *Foundation* of their *hopes* of *Eternal Salvation upon the Sand.* *Mat.* 7. 26.

Now my Brethren, would you not miſtake the way to Heaven, and periſh in a deluſion? would you not be found fools at laſt? for none are ſuch fools as the ſpiritual fool, who is a fool in the *great* buſineſs of *Salvation.* Would you not be fools for your Souls, and for Eternity? O then labour after, and pray for a thorough *work* of *Converſion*, beg of God that he would make a *ſaving change* in your *Souls*, that *you may be altogether Chriſtians*; all other changes below this *ſaving change*, this *heart change*, make us but *almoſt Chriſtians.*

11. *A Man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*: *Jehu* did not only ſerve God, and do what he commanded him, but was very zealous in his ſervice, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. *Come with me, and ſee my zeal for the Lord of Hoſts*; and yet in all this *Jehu* was a very Hypocrite. *Joaſh* was a great reformer in *Jehoiadah's* time; it is ſaid, *He did that which was* 2 *Chro.* 24.

right in the eyes of the Lord, all the days of Jehoja-
V. 17,18. dah *the Prieſt*; but when *Jehoiadah* died, *Joaſh* his zeal for God died with him, and he becomes a very wretch.

Obj. But the Apoſtle makes zeal to be a note of ſound Chriſtianity, *Gal.* 4. 18. *It is good to be zealouſly affected in good things*; nay, it ſeems to be the non-ſuch qualification for obtaining
Mat. 11. 12. Eternal Life, *The Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

Sol. It is true, there is a zeal which is good, and which renders the Soul highly acceptable to God, a zeal that never miſſes of Heaven and Salvation.

Now this is a zeal which is a Cœleſtial fire, the true temper and the heat of all the affections to God and Chriſt; *qui non zelat, non amat.* It is a zeal wrought, and kindled in the Soul by the Spirit of GOD, who firſt works it, and then ſets it on work. It is a zeal that hath the Word of GOD for its guide, directing it in working, both in regard of its object and end, manner and meaſure. It is a zeal that checks Sin, and forwards the Heavenly Life. It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which ſwallows
Joh. 2. 17. up all by-ends. *The zeal of thy Houſe hath eaten me up.*

But now all zeal is not this kind of zeal; there is a falſe zeal, as well as a true; every grace hath its counterfeit; as there is fire, which is true Heavenly fire on the Altar, ſo there is ſtrange fire: *Nadab and Abihu offered* 10.1 *ſtrange fire upon God's Altar.*

There are ſeveral kinds of zeal, none of which are true and ſound, but falſe and counterfeit.

I'll inſtance in eight particulars:

First,

Firſt, *There is blind zeal*, a zeal without knowledge, *Rom.* 10. 2. *They have a zeal*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but not according to knowledge:* Now as knowledge without zeal is fruitleſs, ſo zeal without knowledge is dangerous; it is like Wild-fire in the hand of a Fool, or like the Devil in the Man poſſeſs'd, that threw him ſometimes into the fire, ſometimes into the water; *Zelus abſque ſcientia, quo vehementius irruit, eo gravius corruit.* *Mat.* 17. 15. *Bernard.*

The eye is the light of the Body, and the underſtanding is the light of the Soul: now as the Body without the light of the eye, cannot go without ſtumbling, ſo the Soul without the light of the mind, cannot act without erring.

Zeal without knowledge, is like an *ignis fatuus* in a dark night, that leads a Traveller out of his way, into the Bogs and Mire. This was the zeal of *Paul*, while he was a *Phariſee*, *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I perſecuted this way unto the death.* And ſo *Acts* 26. 9. *I verily thought with my ſelf, I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of* Jeſus *of* Nazareth: So *Phil.* 3. 6. *Concerning zeal perſecuting the Church.* *Act.* 22. 3. 4.

Such zeal was that in *Joh.* 16. 2. *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogue*, (ſilence you, you ſhall not be ſuffered to Preach) *yea the time comes that whoever kills you, will think that he doeth God ſervice.* This is great zeal, but yet it is blind zeal, and that God abhors.

Secondly, *There is a partial zeal*; in one thing fire-hot, in another key-cold; zealous in this thing, and yet careleſs in another: Many are firſt-Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the firſt Table, and yet neg-

* *Mat.* 23. 23. *Lyra* hath these very words, *Filius per professionem factam in Religione excusatur a subveniendo parentibus.*

lect the second: Thus the *Pharisees* were zealous in their * *Corban*, and yet unnatural to their Parents, suffering them to starve and perish. Others are second-Table Christians, zealous in the duties of the second Table, but neglect the first; more for Righteousness among Men, than for Holiness towards God. But now he whose Religion ends with the first Table, or begins with the second, he is a fool in his Profession, for he is but *Almost a Christian.*

The Woman that was for the dividing the Child, was not the true Mother; and he that is for dividing the Commands, is not a true Believer.

2 Kin. 10. 16. compared with *ver.* 29.

Jehu was zealous against *Ahab*'s House, but not so against *Jeroboam's Calves*; many are zealous against Sins of Opinion, that yet use no zeal against the Sins of their Conversation.

Jo. Fernel de Febribus, l. 4. c. 14.

Now as we know that the sweat of the whole Body is a sign of Health, but the sweat of some one part only shews a Distemper; and therefore Physitians do reckon such an heat to be symptomatical.

So, where zeal reaches to every Command of God alike, that is a sign of a sound Constitution of Soul; but where it is partial, where a Man is hot in one part, and cold in another; that is symptomatical of some inward spiritual distemper.

Thirdly, *There is a misplaced zeal*, fixed upon unsuitable and disproportionable Objects: Many are very zealous in Trifling Things that are not worth it, and trifle in the things that most require it; like the *Pharisees* that were diligent Tythers of *Mint*, *Anise*, and *Cummin*, but neglect the *Mat.* 23. 23. τὰ βαρύτερα τῦ νόμυ, the *Weightier Matters of the Law*,

Law Judgment Mercy and Faith. They had no zeal for theſe, though very hot for the other; many are more zealous for a Ceremony, than for the ſubſtance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the Name of *Jeſus*, than for Conformity to the life of *Jeſus*; more zealous for a holy veſtment than for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of Men than for the inſtitutions of Chriſt.

Heathens will riſe up in Judgment againſt ſuch men. *Deus non ſuperſtitione colitur; ſed pietate*, ſaid *Cicero.*

This is a ſuperſtitious zeal, and uſually found in Men unconverted, whom Grace never was wrought in: When was it that *Paul* was ſo *exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his Father*, as he ſaith *Gal.* 1. 14. but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted ſtate? as you may ſee in the next verſes; *But when it pleaſed God to call me by his Grace, then I conferred not with fleſh and Blood: Paul* had another kind of zeal then, acted by other kind of Principles. Gal. 1. 15 16.

Fourthly, *There is a ſelfiſh Zeal*, that hath a Man's own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very Zealous, but it was not ſo much for God, as for the Kingdom; not ſo much in obedience to the command, as in deſign to ſtep into the Throne; and therefore God threatens to puniſh him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hoſ.* 1. 4. *I will avenge the Blood of* Jezreel *upon the Houſe of* Jehu: Becauſe he ſhed that Blood to gratifie his luſt, not to obey God. So * *Simeon* and *Levi* pretend great zeal for Circumciſion, ſeem very zealous for the honour of God's Ordinances when in truth their zeal was for Coveteouſneſs, and revenge upon the *Shechemites.* * Gen. 34. 14, 15. compar'd with *v.* 25, 26, 27 28, 29. *Ne appetat quiſquam ultra videri quam eſt, ut poſſit ultra eſſe quam videtur.*

Fifthly, *There is an out-ſide Zeal*; ſuch was that of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, they would

not eat with unwaſhen hands, but yet would live in unſeen ſins; they would waſh the Cup often, but the heart ſeldom; paint the out-ſide, but neglect the in-ſide: *Jehu* was a mighty out-ſide reform, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. But he reformed nothing within, for he had a baſe heart under all, *Ver.* 31. *Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart.* Though his fleece was fair, his Liver was rotten.

Our Lord Chriſt obſerves of the *Phariſees, they pray to be ſeen of Men*; and faſt ſo, *that they may appear to Men to faſt*, Mat. 6. 5, 16.

Sixthly, *There is a frenſick zeal*, that runs out upon others, like the Candle in the Lanthorn, that ſends all the heat out of the top, or as the Lewd Woman *Solomon* mentions, whoſe *feet abide not in her own houſe.* *Prov.* 7, 11.

Many are hot and high againſt the ſins of others, and yet cannot ſee the ſame in themſelves; like the *Lamiæ*, that put on their Spectacles when they went abroad, but pulled them off within door.

It is eaſie to ſee faults in others, and as hard to ſee them in our ſelves. *Jehu* was zealous againſt *Baal* and his Prieſts, becauſe that was *Ahab*'s ſin; but not againſt the Calves of *Bethel*, becauſe that was his own ſin. This zeal is the true Character of an Hypocrite; his own Garden is over-run with Weeds, while he is buſie in looking over his Neighbour's Pale. *Teetum habita.*

Seventhly, *There is a ſinful zeal*; all the former may be called ſinful from ſome defect; but this I call ſinful in a more ſpecial notion, becauſe againſt the Life and chief part of Religion; it is a zeal againſt zeal, that flies not at Prophaneneſs, but at the very

power

power of Godlineſs; not at Error, but at Truth, and is moſt hot againſt the moſt ſpiritual and important Truths of the Times. Whence elſe are the ſufferings of Men for the Truth, but from the Spirit of Zeal againſt the Truth? This may be called a Deviliſh Zeal; for as there is the Faith of Devils, ſo there is the Zeal of Devils. *Therefore his rage is great, because he knows his Time is ſhort.* *Jam.* 2. 19. *Rev.* 12. 12.

8. There is a *Scriptureleſs Zeal*, that is not butted and bounded by the Word, but by ſome baſe and low end: Such was *Saul's* Zeal, when God bids him deſtroy *Amalek*, *and ſpare neither Man nor Beaſt*; then, contrary to God's Command, he ſpares the beſt of the *Sheep and Oxen*, under pretence of Zeal *for God's Sacrifice.* 1 *Sam.* 15. 3.

Another time, when he had no ſuch command, then he ſlays the *Gibeonites in Zeal to the Children of* Iſrael and Judah. 2 *Sam.* 21. 2.

Many a Man's Zeal is greater then and there, when and where he hath the leaſt Warrant from God.

The true Spirit of Zeal is bounded by Scripture; for it is for God, and the Concernment of his Glory: God hath no Glory from the Zeal that hath no Scripture-Warrant.

Now then, if the Zeal of a Man in the things of God, may be only a blind Zeal or a partial Zeal, or a miſplaced Zeal, or a ſelfiſh Zeal, or an out-ſide Zeal, or a frenſick Zeal, or a ſinful Zeal, or a Scriptureleſs Zeal, then it is evident that a Man may be very Zealous in the Matters of Religion, and yet be but *Almoſt a Chriſtian*,

12. *A Man may be often in Prayer, he may pray often and pray much, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Mat.* 12. 13.

So

So did the *Phariſees* whom yet our Lord Chriſt rejects for Hypocrites.

Object. But is not a praying frame an argument of a ſincere heart? are not the Saints of God called, *The generation of them that ſeek the face of God.* Pſal. 24. 6.

Sol. A Man is not therefore a Chriſtian, becauſe he is much in prayer. I grant,

That thoſe Prayers that are from the workings and ſighings of God's Spirit in us; from ſincere hearts lifted up to God; from a ſenſe of our own emptineſs, and God's infinite fulneſs; That are ſuited to God's Will, the great Rule of Prayer.

That are for Spiritual things, more than Temporal.

That are accompanied with Faith and Dependance: Such Prayers ſpeak a Man *altogegether a Chriſtian.* But now a Man may be much in Prayer, and yet be a ſtranger to ſuch Prayer; As,

1. Nature may put a Man upon Prayer, for it is a part of Natural Worſhip; it may put a Child of God upon Prayer; ſo it did Chriſt, *Mat.* 26. 39, 42. *He went and fell on his face and prayed, ſaying, O my Father if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me.* This was a Prayer of Chriſt, which flowed from the ſinleſs ſtrugglings of Nature ſeeking its own preſervation.

2. A Man may pray in pretence, for a covering to ſome ſin: So did thoſe devout *Phariſees.* Mathew 23. 14. *Woe to you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for ye devour Widdows Houſes, and for a pretence make long Prayers, therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation.* So the *Papiſts* ſeem very devout to pray a rich Man's Soul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the Heir of much of his

Eſtate,

ſtate, under pretence of praying for his Fathers Soul.

A Man may pray, and yet love ſin: as *Auſtin*, before *Converſion*, prayed againſt his ſin, but was afraid God ſhould hear him, and take him at his word. Now God hears not ſuch Prayers. *Pſal.* 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not here my Prayer.*

4. A Man may pray much for Temporal Things, and little for Spiritual Things; and ſuch are the Prayers of moſt Men, crying out moſt for Temporal Things: More for, *Who will ſhew us any good?* than for, *Lord, lift upon us the light of thy Countenance.* *Pſ.* 4. 6. *David* copies out the Prayer of ſuch, *Pſalm* 144. 12, *&c. That our Sons may be as plants,* and 144. *and that our Daughters may be as corner-ſtones,* 12. to 16. *poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a Palace: That our Garners may be full,* &c. *Happy is the People that is in ſuch a caſe.* This is the Carnal Heart's Prayer, and this *David* calls Vanity, *Pſal.* 11. *They are ſtrange Children whoſe mouth ſpeaketh vanity.*

5. A Man may pray, and yet be far from God in Prayer. *This People draw nigh to me* Iſa. 29. 13 *with their mouth, and honour me with their lips. but their heart is far from me,* Matth. 15. 8.

A Man may pray, and yet have no heart in Prayer, and that God chiefly looks at; *My* *Pro.* 23. *Son give me thy heart.* 26.

The *Jews* have this Sentence written upon the Walls of the Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind. is but a body without a Soul.*

It is not enough to be conſcionable, to uſe Prayer, but we muſt be conſcionable to the uſe of Prayer. Many are ſo conſcientious, that they dare not but pray; and yet

ſo

ſo irreligious, that they have no Heart in Prayer; a common Work of God may make a Man leſs conſcionable to do Duties, but nothing than ſaving Grace in the Heart, will make a Man conſcionable in the doing of them.

6. A Man's Prayer may be a Lye; as a Profeſſion without Sanctity, is a Lye to the World; ſo Prayer without Sincerity, is a Lye to God. It is ſaid of *Iſrael*, that they *ſought God and enquired early after him*: They were much in Prayer, and God calls it all but a Lye. * *Nevertheleſs they did flatter him with their Mouth, and they lyed to him with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, ver. 36, 37.

* *Pſ.* 78. 34.

Hearken to my Prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips, ſaith *David*, Pſal. 17. 1.

Some derive the Latine, *Colo*, to worſhip, from the word *flatter*

Greek κολακεύειν, *to flatter*, and the Engliſh from the *Greek* word λατρεύειν, *to Worſhip.*

7. Afflictions and the *Preſſures* of outward evils, will make a Man pray, and pray much, *Pſal.* 78. 34. || *When he ſlew them then they ſought him, and returned and enquired early after God.* The Heathen Mariners call every Man upon his God, when in a Storm: When they fear drowniug, then they fall to praying, *Jon.* 1. 5. Mariners are for the moſt part none of the devouteſt, nor much addicted to Prayer: They will ſwear twice, where they pray once, and yet it is ſaid, *They cry to the Lord in their trouble.* 107. 28, 28. and hence you have a Proverb, *He that cannot pray let him go to Sea.*

|| *Nuper me amici cujuſdam langour admonuit optimus eſſe nos dum infirmi ſumus*, Plin. Ep. l. 7.

Qui neſcit orare, diſcat navigare.

They poured out a Prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them, Iſa. 26. 16.

Now then, if Nature may put a Man upon

on Prayer, if a Man may pray in pretence, and deſign; if a Man may pray, and yet love ſin; if a Man may pray moſtly for temporal things; if a Man may pray, and yet be far from God in prayer; if prayer may be a lye, or it may be only the cry of the Soul under affliction; ſure then a Man may be much in Prayer, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

But ſuppoſe a Man pray, and prevail with God in Prayer, ſurely that is a witneſs from Heaven of a Man's ſincerity in Prayer: now I Pray, and prevail, I ask and am anſwered. *Obj.*

A Man may pray, and be anſwered; for God many times anſwers Prayers in Judgment; As God is ſometimes ſilent in mercy, ſo he ſpeaks in wrath; and as he ſometimes denies Prayer in mercy, ſo he ſometimes anſwers in Judgment; when Men are over-importunate in ſomething their luſts are upon, and will take no nay, then God anſwers in Judgment, *Pſal.* 78. 29. *He gave them their own deſire:* They had deſired Quails, and God ſends them. But now mark the judgment, Ver. 30. 31. *While the meat was in their Mouths the wrath of God came upon them, and ſlew them.* *Sol.*

But ſuppoſe a Man's affections are much ſtirred in Prayer, how then? is not that a true note of Chriſtianity? Now my affections are much ſtirred in Prayer. *Obj.*

So was *Eſau*'s when he ſought the Bleſſing; *He ſought it carefully with tears.* A Man may be affected with his own Parts in a Duty; while good notions paſs through his Head, and good words through his lips, ſome good motions alſo may ſtrain his Heart; but they are but ſparks which fly out at the Tunnel of the Chimny, which ſuddenly vaniſh; ſo that it is poſſible a Man may pray *Heb.* 12. 17.

and

and prevail in Prayer; pray, and be affected in Prayer, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

13. *A Man may ſuffer for Chriſt in his Goods, in his Name, in his Perſon*, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Every Man that bears Chriſt's Croſs on his ſhoulders, doth not therefore bear Chriſt's Image in his Soul.

Obj. But doth not our Lord Chriſt make great promiſes to them that ſuffer, or loſe any thing for him? Doth not he ſay, *Mat.* 19. 29. *Every one that hath forſaken Houſes, or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred Fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life?* Sure they are true Chriſtians whom Chriſt makes this promiſe to.

Mat. 19. 29.

Sol. There is a ſuffering for Chriſt, that is a note of Sincerity, and ſhall have its reward.

Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. That is when a Man ſuffers for a good cauſe, upon a good call, and with a good conſcience, for Chriſt's ſake, and in Chriſt's *ſtrength*; when his ſufferings are a filling up *that which is behind of the ſufferings of Chriſt*; when a Man ſuffers as a Chriſtian, as the Apoſtle hath it, 1 *Pet.* 4. 6. *If a Man ſuffer as a Chriſtian let him not be aſhamed*, when a Man thruſts not himſelf into ſufferings but ſtays God's call, ſuch ſuffering is a proof of Integrity.

Col. 2. 24.

Mark 14. 28, 29.

But now every ſuffering for Chriſt, is not ſuffering as a Chriſtian: For,

1. A Man may ſuffer for Chriſt, for that profeſſion of Religion that is upon him; the World hates the ſhew of Religion; times may come, that it may coſt a Man as dear to wear the Livery of Chriſt, as to wear Chriſt himſelf. *Alexander* had like to have loſt his life for the Goſpel's ſake, *Act.* 19. 33. yet he was that *Alexander* (as is generally judged) that afterwards made Shipwrack of *Faith*, and greatly oppoſed *Paul's* Miniſtry.

1 *Tim.* 1. 19, 20. & 4. 14.

2. A

2. A Man may suffer for Christ, and yet have no true love to Christ. This is supposed in 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Though I give my Body to be burned, and have no Charity, it profits nothing.*

Love to Christ is the only Noble Ground of suffering, but a Man may suffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of Opinion of meriting by our suffering, as the Papists: Or,

2. Out of Vain Glory, or for Applause among Professors; some have dyed, that their Names might live: Or, *Vicit amor patriæ, laudisq; immensa cupido.*

3. Out of a *Roman* Resolution, or stoutness of Spirit. Or,

4. Out of a Design of Profit, as *Judas* forsook all for Christ, hoping to mend his Market by closing with him: Or,

5. Rather to maintain an Opinion, than for Truth's Propagation. *Socrates* dyed for maintaining that there was but one God; but whether he dyed rather for his own Opinion, than for God's sake, I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a Man may suffer for professing Christ, and yet suffer upon wrong Principles.

Now then, if a Man may suffer for *Christ*, from the Profession that is upon him, or suffer for *Christ*, and yet not truly love him; then a Man may suffer for Christ, and yet be but *Almost a Christian.*

4. *A Man may be called of God, and embrace his call, and yet be but almost a Christian. Judas* is a famous instance of this Truth; he was called by Christ himself, and came at the call of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but *Almost a Christian.*

But is not the being under the Call of *Object.* God,

God, a proof of our interest in the predestinating love of God? doth not the Apostle say, *Whom he predestinated, them he called*? Rom. 8. 30. Nay, doth he not say in the next Verse, *Whom he called, them he justified*? Nay, doth not God call all whom he intends to save?

Sol. Though God calleth all those that shall be saved, yet all shall not be saved whom God calleth: Every Man under the Gospel is called of God in one sense or other, but yet every Man under the Gospel shall not therefore be saved. *For many are called, but few chosen.* *Mat.* 20. 16.

There is a two-fold call of God, { *Internal.* / *External.*

1. There is an Internal call of God; Now this call is a special work of the Spirit by the Ministry of the Word, whereby a Man is brought out of a state of Nature, into a state of Grace, *out of darkness into light*; from being *vassals of wrath*, to be made *heirs of life.* *Act.* 26. 18.

I grant, that whoever is under this call of God, is called effectually and savingly, called to be a Christian indeed. *Every Man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to me.* *Joh.* 6. 45.

2. There is a call of God which a Man may have, and yet not be this call; there is an External call of God, which is by the Ministry of the word.

Now every Man that lives under the Preaching of the Gospel, it thus called; God calls every Soul of you to repent, and lay a sure foundation for Heaven and Salvation, by the word you hear this day. *Mat.* 22. 9.

But not every Man that is thus called, is not therefore a Christian: For,

1. Many

1. Many under the call of God, come to
riſt, but are not Converted to Chriſt; have
thing of the Grace and Life of Chriſt, ſuch
he, *Mat.* 22. who when Chriſt ſent out his
vants to bid gueſts unto the Marriage,
me in at the call of Chriſt, but yet *had not*
the Wedding Garment, ver. 11. that is, had
ne of the Grace and Righteouſneſs of Jeſus
riſt.

2. Many that are under the call of the Goſ-
l, come to Chriſt, and yet afterwards fall
ay from Chriſt; as *Judas* and *Damas* did; 2 *Tim.* 4.
is ſaid when Chriſt Preached a Doctrin that 10.
Diſciples did not like, that *from that time*
ny of his Diſciples went back, and walked no *Joh.* 6. 66.
re with him.

Now then, if many are under this External
l of God only, if many that come to Chriſt,
not converted to Chriſt, but fall away from
riſt; then a Man may be called of God,
d yet but but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

5. *A Man may have the Spirit of God, and*
be but almoſt a Chriſtian. *Balaam* had the
irit of God given him when he bleſſed *Iſrael*,
mb. 24. 2. *Balaam ſaw* Iſrael *abiding in*
nts, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him:
dm had it, for by the Spirit he caſt out
vils, he was one of them that came to
riſt, and ſaid, *Lord, even the Devils are*
ject to us: *Saul* had it, 1 *Sam.* 10. 10. *Be-*
d a company of Prophets met him; and the
irit of God came upon him, and he Propheſied
mong them.

But you'll ſay, *Can a Man have the Spirit of* Obj.
d, and yet not be a Chriſtian? Indeed the
ripture ſaith, *If any Man have not the Spirit of* *Rom.* 8. 9.
riſt, he is none of his; but ſurely if any Man
ve the Spirit of Chriſt, he is his.

There

Sol. There is a having the Spirit, which is a sure mark of Saintship. Where the Spirit is an affectual prevailing Principle of Grace and Sanctification, renewing and regenerating the Heart: Where the Spirit is as a potent *Ro.* 8. 26. worker, *helping the Soul's infirmities:* where *Joh.* 14. 16. the Spirit is so as to *abide for ever.* But now every Man that hath the Spirit, hath not the Spirit in this manner: For,

1. A Man may have the Spirit only transiently, not abidingly; the Spirit may be in a Man, and yet not dwell in a Man; the Spirit is where-ever he dwells; but he doth not dwell where-ever he is; he is in all, but dwells *Lomb.* 1. in Saints only; he is in all *per divinitatis præ-sent. dist.* 17. *sentiam*, but dwells in Saints only *per inhabitationis gratiam*: The Hypocrite may have the Spirit for a season, but not to abide in him for ever.

2. A Man may have *the Spirit*, and yet not be born of *the Spirit*: Every true Christian is born of *the Spirit*; an Hypocrite may have the Gifts of the Spirit, but not the Graces; the Spirit may be in him by way of *Illumination*, but not by way of *Sanctification*; by way of *Conviction*, but not by way of *Conversion*: Though he may have much common Grace for the good of others, yet he may have no special Grace for the good of himself; though his Profession be Spiritual, yet is his state and Condition Carnal.

3. A Man may have the Spirit only as a Spirit of Bondage: Thus many have the Spirit working only to Bondage. *The Spirit of Bondage is an operation of the Holy Ghost by the Law, convincing the Conscience of Sin, and of the Curse of the Law, and working in the Soul such an apprehension of the wrath of God, as makes the thoughts of God a terror to him.*

This

This Spirit may be, and often is without ſaving Grace; this Operation of the Spirit was in *Cain* and *Judas*.

Though none do receive the Spirit of *Adoption*, but they firſt receive the Spirit of *Bondage*; yet many receive the Spirit of *Bondage*, that never receive the Spirit of *Adoption*.

4. A Man may have the Spirit of God working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted by him: It is ſaid of the *Jews*, *They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit*; and the ſame Sin is charged upon their Children, Acts 7. 51. *Ye ſtiff-necked, and uncircumciſed in heart, ye have always reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt; as your Fathers did, ſo do ye.* The Hypocrite retains not the Spirit ſo long as to come up to Regeneration and Adoption, but quenches the Motion of it, and thereby miſcarries Eternally.

5. A Man may have the Spirit and yet Sin that unpardonable Sin: He may have the Holy Ghoſt, and yet Sin the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; nay, no Man can Sin this Sin againſt it, but he that hath ſome degree of it.

The true believer hath ſo much of the Spirit, ſuch a work of it in him, that he cannot Sin that Sin: *He that is born of God ſins not*; to wit, *that Sin unto Death*; for that is meant, 1 *John* 5. 16, 17, 18. The carnal Profeſſed Sinner, he cannot Sin that Sin, becauſe he is carnal and ſenſual, having not the *Spirit*. A Man muſt have ſome meaſure of the Spirit that Sins this Sin; ſo hath the Hypocrite; he is ſaid to be *Partaker of the Holy Ghoſt*, Heb. 6. 4. And he only is capable of Sinning the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. *Jude* 19.

Now

Now then, if a Man may have the Spi
tranſiently only, not abidingly; if a Man m
have the Spirit, and yet not be Born of t
Spirit; if he may have the Spirit only as a Sp
rit of Bondage; if a Man may have the Spi
working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted
him; if a Man may have the Spirit, and yet
that unpardonable Sin againſt it; then ſure
a Man may have the Spirit of God, and yet
but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

16. A Man may have Faith, and yet be
Luc. 8. 13. *almoſt a Chriſtian: the ſtony ground* (that
thoſe hearers ſet out by the ſtony-ground
for a while believed. It is ſaid, *John* 2.
That many believed in the Name of Chriſt,
Chriſt durſt not commit himſelf to them. Thou
they truſted in Chriſt, yet Chriſt would n
truſt them; and why? *becauſe he knew all M*
Ver. 24. He knew they were rotten at Ro
1 Cor. 13. notwithſtanding their Faith; a Man may ha
all Faith, to the removing of *Mountains*, a
yet be *nothing.*

Obj. But how can this be, that a Man may ha
Faith, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian?* D
not our Lord Chriſt promiſe Life Eternal a
Salvation, to all that believe? Is not this t
Goſpel that is to be Preached to every Cre
ture, *He that believes, ſhall be ſaved?* Ma
16. 16.

Sol. Tho' it is true what our Lord Chriſt ſaid
that *he that believes ſhall be ſaved*; yet it
as true, that many believe that ſhall never
ſaved; for *Simon Magus* believed; ye
Jam. 2. 19. *James* ſaith, *The Devils believe and tre*
ble: Now none will ſay, theſe ſhall be
ved.

2 Theſ. 3. 2. As it is true, what the Apoſtle ſaid
All Men have not Faith; ſo it is as tru
th

that there are ſome Men have faith, who are no whit the better for their faith.

You muſt know therefore there is a two-fold Faith; { *Special and Saving.* / *Common and not Saving.*

1. There is a ſaving Faith.

This is called *Faith of the Operation of God.* *Col.* 2. 12.

It is a work of God's own Spirit in the Soul.

It is ſuch a Faith, as reſts and caſts the Soul wholly upon Chriſt for Grace and Glory, Pardon and Peace, Sanctification and Salvation.

It is an united Act of the whole Soul, underſtanding, will and affections, all concurring to unite the Soul to an all-ſufficient Redeemer.

It is ſuch a Faith as *purifies the Heart*, and *Act.* 15. 9. makes it clean, it influences and gives ſtrength and life to all other Graces.

Now whoever hath this Faith, is a Chriſtian indeed; this is the *Faith of God's Elect.* But *Tit.* 1. 1. then,

2. There is a common Faith, not ſaving, a fading and temporary Faith; Therefore there is the Faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the Faith of *Act.* 8. 13. *Simon Peter*; *Simon Magus* believed, and yet *compared* was in the *Gall of bitterneſs, and in the Bond of* *with ver.* *iniquity.* 23.

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followers than *Simon Peter*; the Faith of moſt Men will at laſt be found to be no better than the Faith of *Simon Magus*: For,

Firſt, The Faith of moſt is but a *temporary Faith*, it dures for a while, and then dies and periſheth; true and ſaving Faith, ſuch as is the *Faith of God's Elect*, cannot die; It may fail in the Act, but not in the Habit;

Habit; The ſap may not be in the branch, but it is always in the root.

That Faith that periſheth, that Faith a Man may have and periſh.

Secondly, There is a Faith that lyes only in generals, not in particulars. As there is a general and particular Object of Faith, ſo there is a general and particular Faith. The general Object of Faith is the whole Scripture; the particular Object of Faith is Chriſt in the Promiſe.

Now many have a general Faith to believe all the Scripture, and yet have no Faith to make a particular application of Jeſus Chriſt in the Promiſe.

Devils and Reprobates may believe the Truth of the Scripture, and what is written of the Dying and Suffering of Chriſt for Sinners; but there are but few that can cloſe up themſelves in the Wounds of Chriſt, and by his ſtripes fetch in healing to their own Souls.

Thirdly, There is a Faith that his ſeated in the Underſtanding, but not in the Will; this is a very common Faith; many aſſent to the Truth. They believe all the Attributes of God, that he is Juſt, Holy, Wiſe, Faithful, Good, Merciful, *&c.* but yet they reſt not on him notwithſtanding.

They believe the Commands are true, but yet do not obey them: They believe the Promiſes are true, but yet do not embrace and apply them: They believe the Threatnings are true, but yet do not flee from them.

Thus their Faith lies in aſent, but not conſent; they have Faith to confeſs a Judgment but none to take out Execution; by aſent they lay a Foundation, but never Build upon it by Application.

The

They believe that Christ dyed to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ, that they may be saved.

O my Brethren, it is not a believing *Head*, but a believing *Heart*, that makes a Christian; *with the Heart Man believes to Righteousness*; without this our *Faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.* Ro. 10. 10. 1 Cor. 15. 17.

Fourthly, There is a Faith without experience; many believe the Word upon hear-say, to be the Word of God, but they never felt the Power and Virtue of it upon their Hearts and Consciences. Now what good is it to believe the Truth of the Word, if a Mans Conscience never felt the power of the Word? What is it to believe the Truth of the Promise, if we never tasted the sweetness of the Promise?

We are in this case, like a Man that believes the description others make of strange Countries, but never travelled them to know the Truth. Or as a Patient that believes all the Physitian says, but yet tries none of his Potions. We believe the Word, because we cannot gainsay it, but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the Word, and so are but *Almost Christians.*

Fifthly, There is a Faith that is without brokenness of Heart, that doth not avail to melt or soften the Heart, and therefore is not true Faith; for the least true Faith is ever joyned with a bending Will, and broken Heart.

Sixthly, There is a Faith that transforms not the Heart; Faith without Fruit, that doth not bring forth the new Creature in the Soul, but leaves it in a state of Sin and Death.

This is a Faith that makes a Man a sound

Professor, but not a sound Believer; he believes the Truth, but not as it is in Jesus; for then it would change, & transform him into the likeness of Jesus. He believes that a man must be changed that would be saved, but yet is not savingly changed by believing. Thus while others believe to Salvation, he believes to damnation; for *his Web shall not become a Garment, neither shall cover he himself with his work.*

Eph. 4. 21.

Isa. 59. 6.

Now then, if a Mans faith may be but temporary, or may lye only in generals, or may be seated in the understanding only, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart; surely then a man may have Faith, he may *taste of this Heavenly Gift*, and yet be but *Almost a Christian.*

Heb. 6. 4.

17. A Man may go further yet; He *may possibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Every kind of love to those who are Saints, is not a proof of our Saintship. *Pharaoh* loved *Joseph*, and advanced him to the second place in the Kingdom, and yet *Pharaoh* was but a wicked Man. *Ahab* loved *Jehoshaphat*, and made a League with him, and Marryed his Daughter *Athaliah* to *Jehoram*, *Jehoshaphat*'s Son, and yet *Ahab* was a wicked wretch.

Object. But you will say, this seems to contradict the Testimony of the Scriptures; for that makes love to the Saints, and People of God, a sure Proof of our Regeneration, and Intereſt in Life Eternal, 1 *John* 3. 14. *We know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* Nay, the Spirit of God putteth this as a Characteristical distinction between Saints and Sinners, in *verse* 10. *In this the Children of God are manifest,*

and the Children of the Devil; Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother. By Brethren we do not underſtand *Brethren by place*, thoſe who are of the ſame Country or Nation; ſuch are called Brethren, *Ram.* 9. 3. *Acts* 7. 23, 25. Nor do we underſtand *Brethren by race*, thoſe who are deſcended of the ſame Parents; ſuch are called Brethren, *Jam.* 1. 2. But by Brethren, we underſtand *Brethren by Grace*, and ſupernatural Regeneration, ſuch as are the Children of God; and theſe are the Brethren whom to love is a ſure ſign that we are the Children of God. *Phil.* 1. 6.

To this I anſwer, that there is a love to the Children of God, which is a proof of our being the Children of God. *Sol.*

As for inſtance, when we love them as ſuch, for that very reaſon, as being the Saints of God; when we love them for the Image of God, which appeareth in them, becauſe of that Grace and Holineſs which ſhineth forth in their Converſations; this is truly commendable, to love the Godly for Godlineſs ſake; the Saints for Saint-ſhip ſake; this is a ſure Teſtimony of our Chriſtianity. The *love of grace* in another, is a good proof of *the life of grace* in our ſelves. There can be no better evidence of the Spirit of Chriſt in us, than to love the *Image of Chriſt* in others. For this is a certain truth, that a Sinner cannot love a Saint as ſuch: An *Iſraelite* is an Abomination to an *Egyptian.* *Gen.* 3. 15.

There is a contrariety and natural enmity between the two ſeeds; betwen the Children of the world, and thoſe whom the Father in his Eternal love hath choſen out of the World. *Job.* 15. 10 *Simile ſimili gaudet.*

It is likeneſs which is the great ground o
love; now there is the higheſt diſſimilitude
unlikeneſs between an unregenerate ſinner,
a Child of God, and therefore a Child of G
cannot love a ſinner as a ſinner; *In wh*
eyes a vile perſon is contemned, Pſal. 15.
He may love him as a Creature; He may lo
his Soul, or he may love him under ſome R
lation that he ſtands in to him. Thus God lov
the damned Spirits, as they are his Creature
but as fallen Angels he hateth them with
infinite hatred. So to love a ſinner *quate*
a ſinner, this a Child of God cannot do;
neither can a ſinner love a Child of God a
Child of God. That he may love a Child
God, that I grant, but it is upon ſome oth
Conſideration; He may love a perſon that
Holy, not the perſon for his holineſs, but f
ſome other reſpect. As,

1. A man may love a Child of God for h
Loving, Peaceable, Courteous deportment
all with whom he converſeth. Religion bea
tifies the converſation of a man, and ſets hi
off to the eye of the World. The Grace
God is no friend to a moroſe, churliſh, unma
nerly behaviour among men, it provokes an
fable demeanour and ſweetneſs to all; a
where this is found, it winneth reſpect a
love from all.

2. A man may love a Saint for his outwa
greatneſs and ſplendor in the World; Men a
very apt to honour worldly greatneſs, a
therefore the *rich Saint* ſhall be loved and h
noured, whilſt the *poor Saint* is hated and d
ſpiſed. This is as if a man ſhould value t
goodneſs of his Sword by the Imbroidery
his Belt; or his Horſe for the beauty of h
Trappings, rather than for his ſtrength a
ſwiftneſs.

Jam. 2. 2, 3.

Tr

True love to the *Children of God*, reaches to all the Children of God, poor as well as rich, bound as well as free, ignoble as well as noble, for the Image of Chriſt is alike amiable and lovely in all.

3. A man may love a Child of God for his fidelity and uſefulneſs in his place: Where Religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betruſtments, diligent in his buſineſs, faithful in all his Relations; & this obligeth Reſpect. A *carnal* Maſter may prize a *godly* Apprentice or Servant that makes Conſcience of pleaſing his Maſter, and is diligent in promoting his *intereſt*.

I might inſtance in many things of the like nature, as charity, beauty, wit, learning, parts, &c. which may procure Love to the People of God from the Men of the World. But this Love is no proof of Charity: For,

Firſt, It is but a *Natural* love ariſing from ſome carnal reſpect, or ſelf ends; that Love which is made by the Scripture an evidence of our Regeneration, *is a ſpiritual* love, the principal Load-ſtone & attractive whereof is Grace and Holineſs; it is a Love which embraceth *a righteous Man in the name of a righteous Man.* *Col.* 1. 8. *Mat.* 10. 41.

2. A carnal mans love to Saints, is a limited and bounded love; it is not univerſal, *to the ſeed*; Now as in ſin, he that doth not make Conſcience of every Sin, maketh Conſcience of no Sin as Sin; ſo he who doth not love all in whom the Image of *Chriſt* is found, loveth none for that of the Image of Chriſt which is found in them. *Eſth.* 10. 3.

Now then, if the love we bear to the People of God may poſſibly ariſe from natural

tural love only, or from ſome carnal reſpect; or if it be a limited Love, not extended to all the People of God, then it is poſſible that a man may love the people of God, and yet be no better than *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

18. *A man may obey the Commands of God, yea many of the Commands of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. Balaam* ſeems very conſcientious of ſteering his courſe by the Compaſs of Gods Command: When *Balak* ſent to him to come and curſe the People of God, ſaith *Balaam, if* Balak *would give me his houſe full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God,* Numb 22. 18. and 23. 20, 21, 26 ſo in the 38 *verſe*, ſaith he, *The word that God putteth in my mouth, that ſhall I ſpeak:* The Young Man went far in *Obedience*, Mark 10. 20. *All theſe have I obſerved from my Youth up.* And yet he was but an Hypocrite, for he forſook Chriſt after all.

Obj. But is it not ſaid, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifeſt my ſelf unto him,* John 14. 12. And doth not our Lord Chriſt tell us expreſly, *ye are my friends if you do what I command you,* John 15. 14. And can a man be a friend of Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

I anſwer, that there is an Obedience to the Commands of Chriſt, which is a ſure proof of our Chriſtianity and Friendſhip to Chriſt.

This Obedience hath a three-fold property.

It is { *Evangelical.* *Univerſal.* *Continual.*

Firſt,

First, It is *Evangelical* Obedience, and that both in matter and manner, ground and end.

In the *Matter of it*; and that is what God requires, *Joh.* 15. 14. *Ye are my friends if ye do whatever I command you.*

In the *Manner* of it; and that is according as God requires, *Joh.* 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

In the *Ground* of it; and that is a *pure Heart, a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned*, 1 Tim. 1. 5.

In the *End* of it; and that is the Honour and Glory of God; *Whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*, 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Secondly, It is an Universal Obedience, which extendeth it self to all the Commands of God alike; it respects the Duties of both Tables; Such was the Obedience of *Caleb, who followed the Lord fully*, and of *David*, who had *respect to all his Commands*. *Num.* 14. 24. *Ps.* 119. 6.

Thirdly, It is a *continual Obedience*, a putting the hand to God's Plow without looking back; *I have inclined my heart to perform thy Statutes alway, even to the end*, Psal. 119. 112. *Incipere multorum est, perseverare paucorum* Bern.

He that thus obeys the Command of God, is a Christian indeed, a Friend of Christ indeed, but all Obedience to the Commands of God, is not this Obedience. For,

1. There is a partial Obedience, a piecemeal Religion, when a Man obeys God in one Command, and not in another; owns him in one Duty, and not in another; when a Man seems to make Conscience of the Duties of one Table, and not of the Duties of another. This is the Religion of most.

Now this Obedience is no Obedience; for as he that doth not love God, *above all*, doth

not love God *at all*, ſo he that doth not obey *all* the Commands *univerſally*, cannot be ſaid to obey any Command *truely*. It is ſaid of thoſe in *Samaria*, that they *feared the Lord, and ſerved their own Gods after their own manner*, 2 Kings 17. 23. And yet in the very next Verſe it is ſaid, *They feared not the Lord*: So that their fear of the Lord was no fear. In like manner that Obedience to God is no Obedience, which is but a partial and piecemeal Obedience.

2. A Man may obey much, and yet be in his old nature; and if ſo, then all his Obedience in that eſtate, is but *ſplendidum peccatum*, a painted ſin: *He that offereth an Oblation, it as if he offered Swines Blood*; *and he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol*, Iſa. 66. 3. The Nature muſt be renewed before the Command can be rightly obeyed; for *a corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good fruit*, Matth. 7. 18. Whatever a Mans performances are, they cannot be called *Obedience*, whilſt the heart remaineth unregenerate, becauſe the *Principle* is falſe and unſound; every duty done by a Believer, is accepted of God as a part of his Eph. 6. 6. Obedience to the Will of God, though it be Ro 6. 17. done in much weakneſs; becauſe, though the Believers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart is right*: The Hypocrite may have the moſt *active hand*, but the Believer hath the moſt *faithful* and *ſincere heart*.

3. A Man may obey the *Law*, and yet have no Love to the *Law giver*: A carnal heart may do the Command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright, for love to God is the foundation and ſpring of all True Obedience; Every Command of God is to be done in love: This

is

the *fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 10. The Apostle saith, *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my Body to be burned* (these seem to be acts of the highest obedience) yet *if I have not love, it profits me nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. 3.

4. I might add, that a man may be much in obedience from sinister and base selfish ends, as the *Pharisees prayed much, gave much almes, fasted much*; but our Lord Christ tells us, that it was, *That they might be seen of men, and have glory of men*, Mat. 6. 2, 5, 16. Most of the Hypocrites Piety empties it self into vain glory, and therefore he is but an *empty vine* in all he doth, because *he bringeth forth fruit to himself*, Hos. 10. 1.

It is the end that justifies the action, indeed a good end can't make a bad action good, but yet the want of a *good end* makes a *good action* bad.

Now then, if a Man may obey the Commands of God partially, and by halves; if he may do it and yet be in his natural state; if he may obey the Commands of God, and yet not love God; if the ends of his Obedience may be sinful and unwarrantable; then a man may be much in obeying the Commands of God, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

19. *A man may be sanctified, and yet be but almost a Christian.* Every kind of sanctification doth not make a man a new Creature; for many are sanctified that are never renewed. You read in *Heb.* 10. 29. of them that count the *blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing.*

But doth not the Scripture tell us, that *both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all one, for which cause he is not asha-*

med to call them Brethren, Heb. 2. 11. And can a man be one with Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian?*

Sol. To this I anſwer; You muſt know there is a two-fold work of Sanctification ſpoken of in Scripture.

The one common and ineffectual.

The other ſpecial and effectual.

That work of *Sanctification* which is true & effectual, is a working of the ſpirit of God in the Soul, enabling it to the *mortifying* of all ſin, to the obeying of every Command, to walking with God in all well-pleaſing.

Rom. 8. 12 *1 Pet.* 1. 2. *Heb.* 13.

Now whoever is thus ſanctified, is one with him that ſanctifieth. Chriſt will not be a ſhamed to call ſuch Brethren, for they are *fleſh of his fleſh, and bone of his bone.*

Eph. 5. 30

But then there is a more common work of Sanctification, which is ineffectual as to the two great works, of dying to Sin, and living to God. This kind of Sanctification may help to reſtrain Sin, but not to mortifie Sin; it may lop off the Boughs, but it layeth not the Axe to the Root of the Tree; it ſweeps and garniſhes the *Room* with common Virtues, but doth not adorn it with ſaving Graces; ſo that a man is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, notwithſtanding this Sanctification.

Rom. 6 11. *Mat.* 12. 44.

Or thus; there is an { *Inward* and *Outward* } Sanctification.

Inward Sanctification is that which deals with the Soul and its Faculties, Underſtanding, Conſcience, Will, Memory, and Affections. *Outward Sanctification* is that which deals with the Life and Converſation; both theſe muſt concur to make a man a Chri-

Chriſtian indeed; therefore the Apoſtle puts them together in his Prayer for the *Theſſalonians*, 1 Theſ. 5. 23. *The God of peace ſanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit, and ſoul, and Body, be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* A Man is then ſanctified wholly, when he is ſanctified both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart & affections, and in Life and Converſation. Outward Sanctification is not enough without inward, nor inward without outward; we muſt have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*, Pſ 4. 4. The heart muſt be pure, that we may not incur blame from within; and the hands muſt be clean, that we may not incur ſhame from without; we muſt have hearts *ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and Bodies waſhed with pure Water. We muſt cleanſe our ſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. Inward purity is the moſt excellent, but without the outward, it is not ſufficient: The True Chriſtian is made up of both.

Non magna munera, ſed immunes manus menſque ſincera Deo placet.

Heb. 10. 22.

Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts; they *waſh the outſide of the Cup and Platter, when all is filthy within:* Now the former without the latter profiteth a man no more than it profited *Pilate*, who condemned Chriſt, to waſh his hands in the preſence of the People; *manus abluit, & cor polluit*, he waſhed his hands of the blood of Chriſt, and yet had a hand in the Death of Chriſt. The *Egyptian* Temples were beautiful on the out-ſide, but within you ſhould find nothing but ſome Serpent or Crocodile. *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, Rom. 2. 28. *Judas* was a *Saint* without, but a *Sinner* within; openly a *Diſciple*, but ſecretly a *Devil*.

John 6. 70.

Some

Some pretend to inward ſanctity without outward; this is the pretence of the open ſinner: Though I ſometimes drop an idle fooliſh Word, ſaith he, or though I ſometimes Swear an Oath, yet I think no hurt; I thank God, my Heart is as good as the beſt; ſuch are like the ſinner *Moſes* mentions, that *bleſſed himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt*, Deut. 19. 20.

Some pretend outward Sanctity, without inward; ſuch are like the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who *outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocriſie and iniquity*, fair Profeſſors, but foul Sinners.

Mat 23. 28.

Inward Sanctity without *outward*, is *impoſſible*, for it will reform the Life: *Outward Sanctity* without *inward*, is *unprofitable*, for it will not reform the heart; a Man is not a true Chriſtian without both: The Body doth not make a Man without the Soul, nor the Soul without the Body; both are eſſential to the Being of a Man; ſo the Sanctification of both, are eſſential to the Being of the *New Man*. True Sanctification begins at the Heart, but works out into the Life and Converſation; and if ſo, then a Man may attain to an outward Sanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no better than *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

20. And ſo I ſhall end this long purſuit of the almoſt Chriſtian in his progreſs Heavenward, with this one general Concluſion.

A Man may do all (as to external Duties and Worſhip) that a true Chriſtian can, and when he hath done all, be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

You

You muſt know, all the Commands of God ave an *intra* and an *extra*; there is (as I may y) the Body and the Soul of the Command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *xternal* Worſhip of God.

Now the *internal* Acts of Worſhipping of God, are to love God, to fear God, to delight in God, to truſt in God, *&c.*

The *external* Acts of worſhipping God, are y praying, teaching, hearing, *&c.*

Now there is a vaſt difference between theſe nternal and external Acts of Worſhip, (and ndeed ſuch a difference there is) that they iſtinguiſh the *altogether* from the *almoſt* Chriian; the ſincere Believer from the unſound Profeſſor; and indeed in this very thing, the ain difference between them doth lye.

1. *Internal* Acts of Worſhip are good, *propter fieri*: The goodneſs doth adhere intrinſecally to the thing done; a man cannot love God, nor fear God, but it will be imputed to him for a gracious Act, and a great part of his Holineſs.

But now *External* Acts of Worſhip, are not denominated good, ſo much from the matter done, *propter fieri*, as from the manner of doing them; a Man cannot ſin in loving and delighting in God, but he may ſin in praying and hearing, *&c.* for want of a due manner.

2. *Internal* Acts of Worſhip put a goodneſs into *External*; it is our Faith, our Love, our Fear of God, that makes our Duties good.

3. They better the heart, and greaten the degrees of a Mans Holineſs; External Duties do not always do this; a Man may pray, and yet his heart never the holier; he may hear the Word, and yet his heart never

never the ſofter, but now the more a Man fears God, the wiſer he is, *Prov.* 1. 7. The more a Man loves God, the Holier he is: Love is the perfection of Holineſs, we ſhall never be perfect in Holineſs, till we come to be perfect in Love.

4. There is ſuch an Excellency in this *internal* Worſhip, that he who mixes it with his *external* Duties, is a True Chriſtian when he doth leaſt. But without this mixture, he is but *Almoſt a Chriſtian* that doth moſt.

Internal Acts of Worſhip, joyned with outward, ſanctifie them, and make them accepted of God, though few; *External* Acts of Worſhip, without inward, make them abhorred of God, though they be *never ſo many.*

So that though the Almoſt Chriſtian may do all thoſe Duties in Hypocriſie, which a true Chriſtian doth in ſincerity: Nay, tho' in doing External Duties, he may out-do the true Chriſtian, (as the Comet makes a greater blaze than the true Star; if *Elijah* faſt and mourn, *Baal*'s Prieſts will cut their Fleſh) yet he cannot do thoſe *Internal* Duties, that the meaneſt true Chriſtian can.

The Almoſt Chriſtian can pray, but he cannot love God; he can teach or hear, *&c.* but he cannot take delight in God.

Job 27. 10. Mark *Job*'s Query concerning the Hypocrite, *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?*

This is *Chriſtianorum propria virtus. Hæc propria eſt delectationis materia, & cum habeas quæ deſideraveris perfruaris*, Pined. in loc

He will *Pray* to the *Almighty*, but *will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* Will he take pleaſure in God?

Ah no! he will not, he cannot. *Delight*

Delight in God ariseth from a suitableness between the faculty and the object; now none more unsuitable than God and a carnal heart.

Delight arises from the having what we desire, and from enjoying what we have: How then can he delight in God, that neither enjoyeth, nor hath, nor truly desireth God?

Delight in God is one of the highest exercises of Grace; and therefore how can he delight in God, that hath no Grace?

Why then should any Saint of God be discouraged, when he hears how far the *almost Christian* may go in the way to Heaven, when as he that is the weakest true Believer, that hath the least true Grace goes farther than he, for he believes in, and loves God.

Should the *Almost Christian* do less (as to matter of external Duties) yet if he had but the least true Faith, the least sincerity of Love to Christ, he would surely be saved; & should the true Christian do ten times more Duties than he doth, yet, had he not Faith in Christ, and love to Christ, he would surely be rejected.

Oh therefore, let not any weak Believer be discouraged, though Hypocrites may out-do them, and go beyond them in duty; for all their duties are done in Hypocrisie; but your Faith and Love to God in Duties, is a proof of your Sincerity.

1. I do not speak this to discourage any Soul in the doing of Duties, or to beat down outward *Performances*, but to rectifie the Soul in the *doing of them.*

As the Apostle saith, *Covet earnestly the best gifts; but yet I shew you a more excellent way*; so I say, Covet the best Gifts, covet much to be in Duties, much in Prayer, much in

1 Cor. 12. 32.

in hearing, &c. *But yet I ſhew you a more excellent way*, and that is, the way of Faith and Love; pray much, but then believe much too.

Hear much, read much, but then love God much too. Delight in the Word and Ordinances of God much, but then delight in the God of Ordinances more

And when you are moſt in duties, as to your uſe of them; Oh then be ſure to be above duties, as to your reſting and dependance upon them. Would you be Chriſtians indeed, altogether Chriſtians? Oh then, be much in the uſe and exerciſe of Ordinances, but be much more in Faith and dependance upon Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs; when your Obedience is moſt *to the Command*, then let your Faith be moſt upon the *Promiſe*.

The Profeſſor reſts in his Duties, and ſo is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*; but you muſt be ſure to reſt upon the Lord Chriſt; this is the way to be *altogether Chriſtians*; for, *if ye believe, then are ye* Abraham's *Seed, and Heirs according to the Promiſe*.

And thus I have anſwered the firſt Query; to wit, How far a man may go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

1. He may have much Knowledge.
2. He may have great Gifts.
3. He may have a high Profeſſion.
4. He may do much againſt Sin.
5. He may deſire Grace.
6. He may tremble at the Word.
7. He may delight in the Word.
8. He may be a Member of the Church of Chriſt.
9. He may have great hopes of Heaven.
10. He may be under great and viſible changes.

11. He

11. He may be very zealous in the Matters Religion.
12. He may be much in Prayer.
13. He may ſuffer for Chriſt.
14. He may be called of God.
15. He may in ſome ſenſe have the Spirit God.
16. He may have ſome kind of Faith.
17. He may love the People of God.
18. He may go far in obeying the Com-ands of God.
19. He may be in ſome ſenſe ſanctified.
20. He may do all (as to external Duties) at a true Chriſtian can, and yet be no bet-r than *Almoſt a Chriſtian.*

The Second Queſtion.

Why, or whence is it, that many men go ſo far, that they come to be Almoſt Chriſtians.

Firſt, *It may be to anſwer the call of Conſci-ce*; though few men have Grace, yet all en have Conſcience.

Now do but obſerve, and you ſhall ſee how r Conſcience may go in this work.

1. *Conſcience owns a God, and that this God uſt be worſhipped and ſerved by the creature.* heiſts in practice we have many, ſuch as e Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profeſs ey know God, but in works they deny him.*

But Atheiſts in Judgement none can be; ully a Heathen, could ſay, *Nulla Gens tam rbara, &c.*

Now there being ſuch a light in Conſcience s to diſcover that there is a God, and that e muſt be worſhipped by the help of farther ght, the light of the Word; a man may be nabled to do much in the ways of God, and et his Heart without a dram of Grace.

2. Know this, that *natural conſcience is capa-ble*

ble of great Improvements from the Means of Grace; ſitting under the Ordinances, may exceedingly heighten the endowments of Conſcience; though they do not ſanctifie Conſcience; it may be much regulated, tho' it be not all renewed; it may be *enlightned, convinced* and yet never *ſavingly converted, and changed.*

Ye read in *Heb.* 6. 4. of ſome that were *once enlightned, and taſted of the Heavenly Gift and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.* What work ſhall we call this? It could not be a ſaving work, a true Change and Converſion of ſtate; for notwithſtanding this enlightning and taſting, and partaking, yet they are here ſaid to *fall away*, ver. 6.

Had it been a true work of Grace, they could never have fallen away from that; a Believer may fall, but he cannot fall away; he may fall foully, but he can never fall finally, for *underneath are the everlaſting Arms:* his Faith is eſtabliſhed in the ſtrength of that Prayer of Chriſt, that our Faith fail not; nay, he tells us expreſly, that it is eternal life which he gives, from which we ſhall *never periſh*, John 10. 28.

Deut. 33. 27. Luke 22. 32.

This work then here ſpoken of, cannot be any ſaving work, becauſe it is not an abiding work; for they that are under it, are ſaid to fall away from it; but though it be not a ſaving work, yet it is a ſupernatural work; it is an improvement made by the word upon the Conſciences of Men through the power of the Spirit; and therefore they are ſaid to *taſte the good Word of God*, and to be made *Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*; they have not the Spirit abiding in them ſavingly, but ſtriving with them, and working upon them convincingly, to the awakening, and ſetting Conſcience

ence on work. And Conſcience thus ſtirred, y carry a man very far in Religion, and in e Duties of the Goſpel, and yet be but a na- ral Conſcience.

A common work of the Spirit, may ſtead a man ry much in the Duties of Religion, though it uſt be a ſpecial work of the ſpirit that ſteads an to Salvation; a man may have the aſſiſt- preſence of the Spirit, enabling him to each and Pray, and yet he may periſh for nt of the renewing preſence of the Spirit en- ling him to believe: *Judas* had the former, d yet periſhed for want of the latter; he d the Spirit aſſiſting him to caſt out Devils; t yet he had not the Spirit renewing him, he was caſt out himſelf. Thus a Man may ve an improved Conſcience, and yet be a anger to a renewed Conſcience; and Con- ence thus improved may put a man very uch upon Duty.

I pray God none of us miſtake a *Conſcience* us improved by the *Word*, for a *Conſcience* newed by the Spirit, the miſtake is very ea- , eſpecially when a Life of Duties is the uit of it.

3. *The Conſcience of a natural man is ſubject diſtreſs and trouble*; though a natural *Conſci- e* is not *ſanctified* with Grace; yet it is often ubled at ſin; trouble of Conſcience is not ident to *Believers* only, but ſometimes to *believers* alſo. A *Believers* Conſcience is metimes troubled when his ſin is truly par- ned; and a natural mans Conſcience is trou- d for ſin, though it is never freed from . God ſometimes ſets the Word home on the ſinners Conſcience, and applies the rors of the Law to it, and this fills the Soul th fear and horror of Death and Hell;

now

now in this case the soul usually betakes it self to a life of duties; meerly to fence trouble out of Conscience.

2 *Sam.* 14. 30, 31. When *Absalom* sets fire on *Joab*'s Cornfields then he runs to him, though he refused before: so when God lets a spark of Hell, (as it were) fall upon the sinners *Conscience*, in applying the terrors of the Word; this drives the sinner to a life of duties, which he never minded before. The ground of many a mans engaging in Religion, is the trouble of his Conscience; and the end of his continuing in Religion, is the quieting of Conscience; if Conscience would never check him, God should never hear from him.

Natural Conscience hath a voice, and speaks aloud many times in the sinners ears, & telleth him, this ought not to be done, God must not be forgotten, the *Commands of God* ought not to be slighted; living in sin will be the ruine of the soul; and hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeless & graceless profession, that he may thereby silence Conscience. As a man sick in his stomach whatever sweet morsel he hath eaten, he brings up all; and although it was sweet in the eating, yet it is bitter in the rising.

So it fareth with the Sinner, when he is Sermon-sick, or Conscience-sick; though his sin was *sweet* in the practice, yet the thought of it riseth bitter upon the Conscience, and then his profession of Religion is the Pill he rolleth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterness of sins taste.

4. *Natural conscience enlightened by the Word may discover to a man much of the misery of a natural state*; though not effectually to bring him out of it, yet so as to make him restless

nd weary in it; it may shew a sinner his na-edness, and hereupon the soul runneth to a se of *duties*, thinking hereby to stead the mi-ry of his case, and to make a covering for is nakedness. It is said, *Genesis* 3. 7. That hen *Adam and Eve saw they were naked, they ewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves a overing.* So when once the sinner seeth his na-edness and vileness, by reason of sin, where-s he should run to Christ, and close with him, nd beg his righteousness for a covering, *that he shame of his nakedness do h not appear*, Rev. . 18. He rather runneth to a life of duties nd performances, and thus maketh himself a overing with the *fig-leaves* of *a profession* with-ut *Christ* truely embraced, and Conscience at ll renewed. Natural man would fain be his wn Saviour, and supposeth a change of state o be a thing within his own power, and that he true work of Grace lieth in leaving off the ractise of sin, and taking up a life of duties; nd therefore upon this principle doth many graceless professor out-strip a sound Be-iever; for he resteth in his own Performan-es, and hopeth these will commend him to God.

If a natural Conscience may go thus far, then Quest. *what difference is there between this natural Con-science in Hypocrites and Sinners, and a renewed Conscience in believers? Or how may I know whe-ther the working of my conscience be the working of nature only, or else of grace wrought in it.*

I grant, that it is difficult to distinguish be-tween the one and the other; and the diffi- *Sol.* culty hath a two-fold rise.

1. It ariseth from that Hypocrisie that is in the best Saints, the weakest believer is no *Hypocrite*, but yet there is some *Hypocrisie* in the

the strongest Believer; where there is *much grace*, there is *some sin*; and where there is *most sincerity*, yet there is *some hypocrisie*.

Pigmalion *made an Image so lively, that he deceived himself, and taking the Picture for a Person, fell in love with the Picture.*

Now it is very incident to a tender Conscience to misgive and mistrust its state upon the sight of any sin; when he sees hypocrisie breaking out in any duty or performance, then he complains, *Surely my aims are not sincere, my Conscience is not renewed; it is but natural Conscience enlightned, not by Grace purged and changed.*

2. It ariseth from that resemblance there is between *grace* and *hypocrisie*, for *hypocrisie* is a resemblance of grace without substance, the likeness of *grace* without the *life of Grace*. There is no grace, but an hypocrite may have somewhat like it; and there is no duty done by a Christian, but an hypocrite may out-strip him in it. Now when one that hath no true grace shall go farther than one that hath, this may well make the Believer question whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his Conscience be not the workings of nature only, rather than of Grace wrought in it.

But to answer the question; You may make a judgment of this in these seven particulars.

1. *If a natural mans Conscience putteth him upon Duty, he doth usually bound himself in the work of God:* His duties are limited, his obedience is a limited obedience; he doth one duty and neglecteth another; he picketh and chuseth among the Commands of *God*; obeyeth one, and slighteth another. Thus much is enough, what need any more? If I do thus and thus, I shall go to Heaven at last.

But now where Conscience is renewed by Grace, there it is otherwise; though there may

may be many weakneſſes which accompany its doings, yet that Soul never bounds it ſelf in working after God; it never loves God ſo much, but ſtill it would love him more, nor ſeeks him ſo much, but ſtill it would ſeek him more; nor doth it ſerve God ſo well at any time, but ſtill it makes Conſcience of ſerving him better. *A renewed Conſcience is a ſpring of univerſal Obedience, Pſal.* 119. 128. for it ſeeth an infinite excellency and goodneſs, and holineſs in God, and therefore would fain have its ſervice riſe up towards ſome proportionableneſs to the Object; a God of infinite excellency and goodneſs ſhould have infinite love, ſaith Conſcience; a holy God ſhould have ſervice from a holy heart, ſaith Conſcience. *Pſa.* 119. 20.

Now then, if I ſet bounds to my Love to God, or to my Service to God; if I limit my ſelf in my Obedience to the Holy God; love one Command, and ſlight another; obey in one point, and yet lye croſs in another; then all I do but the working of a Natural Conſcience. But on the other hand, if I love the Lord with my whole heart, and whole Soul, and ſerve him with all my might and ſtrength; *I eſteem all Gods precepts concerning all things, be right, and have reſpect to all thy commands,* then is my love and ſervice from a renewed Conſcience. *Mat.* 22. 37. *Mark* 12. 33.

2. *If a natural Mans Conſcience check or accuſe for ſin, then he ſeeketh to ſtop the mouth of it, but not to ſatisfie it*; moſt of the natural Mans duties are to ſtill and ſtifle Conſcience.

But now the Believer chuſeth rather to let Conſcience cry, than to ſtop the mouth of it, until he can do it upon good terms, until he can fetch in ſatisfaction to it, from the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, by freſh Acts of Faith appre-

The

The natural Man seeketh to still the noi
of Conscience, rather than to remove the gui
the Believer seeketh the removal of guilt
the application of Christ's Blood, and th
Conscience is quiet of it self. As a foolish M
having a mote fallen into his Eye, and maki
it water, he wipeth away the water, and
bours to keep it dry, but never searcheth
eye to get out the Mote; but a wise M
mindeth not so much the wiping, as t
seaching his eye; somewhat is got in, a
that causeth the watering, and therefore t
Cause must be removed.

Now then, if when Conscience accuseth
sin, I take up a life of duties, a form of go
ness, to stop the mouth of Conscience; and
hereupon Conscience be still and quiet, then
this but a natural Conscience; but if wh
Conscience checks, it will not be satisfied w
any thing but the *Blood of Christ*, and the
fore I use duties to bring me to Christ; and
I beg the *sprinkling* of his *Blood* upon Con
ence, and labour not so much to stop the mou
of it, as to remove guilt from it, then is t
a renewed Conscience.

3. *There is no natural Man, let him go n*
so far, let him do never so much in matters of
ligion, but still he hath his Dalilah, *his bosom-i*

*Joh.*12 6. *Judas* went far, but he carryed his covetous
Mark 6 20. along with him; *Herod* went far, *he did m*
things under the force of *John*'s Ministry,
yet there was one thing he did not; he did
v. 17,18. put away his Brothers Wife; his *Herodias*
in his Bosom still. Nay, commonly, all the
tural Mans Duties are to hide some sin,
profession is only made use of for a *cover-sin*

Psa. 119. 128. But now the Renewed Conscience hat
all sin, as *David* did, *I hate every false w*

he regardeth no iniquity in his heart; he useth duties, not to cover sin, but to help to work down, and work out sin. *Ps.66.18*

Now then, if I profess Religion, if I make mention of the name of the Lord, *& make my boast of the Law, and yet through breaking the Law dishonour God.* If I live in the love of any sin, and make use of my Profession to cover it, then am I an *Hypocrite*, and my duties flow but from a natural Conscience. But on the other hand, *If I name the name of our Lord Jesus*, & withal *depart from iniquity*; if I use duties not to cover, but to discover & mortifie sin, then am I upright before God, and my duties flow from a renewed Conscience. *Rom.* 2.2. *2 Tim* 2. 19.

4. *A natural man prides himself in his duties*; if he be much in duty, then he is much lifted up under duty; so did the *Pharisees*, Luke 18. *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are*; and why? where lay the difference? why, *I fast twice in the Week, I give tithes of all*, &c. *Luke* 18. 11, 12.

But now, take a gracious heart, a renewed Conscience, and when his duties are at highest, then is his heart at lowest. Thus it was with the Apostle *Paul*, he was much in service, *in season and out of season*, Preaching up the Lord Jesus with all boldness and earnestness, and yet very humble in a sence of his own unworthiness under all; *I am not worthy to be called an Apostle*, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *To me who am less than the least of all Saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, Eph. 3. 8. And again, 1 *Tim* 1. 15. *Of sinners I am chief.* Thus a Believer, when he is highest in duties, then is he lowest in humility; duty puffeth up the Hypocrite, but a Believer *2 Tim.* 4. 2.

comes away humbled; and why? becauſe the hypocrite hath had no viſions of God; he hath ſeen only his own gifts & parts, & this exalteth him; but the Believer hath ſeen God, and enjoyed Communion with God, & this humbleth him. Communion with God, though it be very refreſhing, yet it is alſo very abaſing & humbling to the creature. *Hierom* obſerveth on *Zeph.* 1. 1. where it is ſaid, that *Cuſhi* was *the Son of* Gedaliah, *the Son of* Amariah. That *Amariah* ſignifieth *the word of the Lord*, *Gedaliah* ſignifieth *the greatneſs of the Lord*, and *Cuſhi* is interpreted *humility* or my *Æthiopian*. So that ſaith he, *from the Word of the Lord*, cometh a ſight of the *greatneſs of the Lord*; and from a ſight of the *greatneſs of the Lord*, commeth *humility*.

Now then, if I pride my ſelf in any duty, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not ſeen nor met with God in any duty. But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at higheſt, my heart is at loweſt; if when my Spirit is moſt raiſed, my heart is then moſt humbled; if in the midſt of all my ſervices, I can maintain a ſenſe of my own unworthineſs; if *Cuſhi* be the Son of *Gedaliah*; then have I ſeen & had Communion with God in duty, & my performances are from a renewed Conſcience.

5. *Look what that is to which the heart doth ſecretly render the glory of a duty, and that is the principle of the duty*; in *Hab.* 1. 16. ye read of them that *Sacrifice to their Net, and burn incenſe to their drag*; where the glory of an *action* is rendered to a mans ſelf, the principle of that action is ſelf; all *Rivers* run into the *Sea*, that is an *argument* they came from the *Sea*; ſo when all a mans duties, *terminate* in

Eccl. 1 7.

self; then is self the principle of all.

Now all the natural Mans Duties run into himself; he was never by a thorough work of Grace truely cast out of himself, and brought to deny himself, and therefore he can rise no higher than himself in all he doth; he was never brought to be *poor in Spirit*, and so to live upon another; to be carryed out of all Duties to Jesus Christ.

But the Believer giveth the Glory of all his services to God; whatever strength or life there is in Duty. God hath all the Glory; *Psa.* 115. 1. for he is by Grace outed of himself, and therefore seeth no excellency or worthiness in self. *I laboured more abundantly than they all*, saith the Apostle; but to whom doth he ascribe the Glory of this? to self? No, *yet not I*, saith he, *but the Grace of God which was with me*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Whenever the Grace of Christ is wrought in the heart as a principle of Duty, you shall find the Soul when it is most carried out with a *yet not I*, in the mouth of it, *I live, yet not I*; *I laboured more abundantly than all*; *yet not I*: Self is disclaimed, and Christ most advanced, when it is from Grace that the heart is quickened; the *twenty four Elders cast their Crowns at Christs feet*, Rev. 4. 10. *Gal.* 2. 20.

There are two things very hard; one is to take the shame of our sins to our selves; the other is to give the Glory of our services to Christ.

Now then, *If I sacrifice to my own Net*, if I aim at my own credit or profit, and give the glory of all I do to self, then do I sow to the flesh, and was never yet cast out of self, *Gal.* 6. 8. but act only from a natural Conscience; but if I give the glory of all my strength and

life in Duty only to God, if I magnifie Grace in all, and can truly say in all I do, *yet not I*, then am I truly cast out of self, and do what I do with a renewed Conscience.

6. *Tho' a natural Conscience may put a man much upon service, yet it never presseth to the attainment of holiness*; so that he carryeth an unsanctified heart under all; how long was *Judas* a Professor, and not one dram of Grace that he had got? *The foolish Virgins* (you know) *took the Lamps, but took no Oil in their Vessels*; that is, they looked more after a profession, than after sanctification. Mat. 25. 3.

But now when a renewed Conscience puteth a man upon duty, it is succeeded with the growth of holiness; as Grace helpeth to the doing of duty, so duty helpeth to the growing of Grace; a Believer is the more holy and the more heavenly, by his being much in duties.

Now then, if I am much in a life of duties and yet a stranger to a life of holiness; if I maintain a high profession, and yet have not a true work of sanctification; if (like Children in the Rickets) I grow big in the head but weak in the feet, then have I gifts and parts, but no grace; and though I am much in service, yet have I but a natural Conscience; but on the other hand, if the holiness of my conversation carryeth a proportion to my profession; if I am not a *hearer of the Word only*, but a *doer of it*; if Grace groweth in seasons of duty, then I do act in the things of God from a renewed Conscience.

7. And lastly, *If a natural Conscience be the spring of duty, why then this spring runs fastest at first, and so abateth, and at last dryeth up*; but if a renewed Conscience, a sanctified Heart

e the ſpring of duty, then this ſpring will ever dry up, it will run always from firſt to aſt, and run quicker at laſt than firſt. *I know thy works, and the laſt to be more than the firſt,* Rev 2. 19. *The Righteous ſhall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, ſhall be ſtronger and ſtronger,* Job 17 9.

But you will ſay, Why doth that man abate nd languiſh in his duties, that doth them from natural Conſcience, more than he that doth hem from a renewed Conſcience? *Queſt.*

The Reaſon is, becauſe they grow upon a ailable root, a decaying root, and that is Nature; Nature is a fading root, and ſo are ll its fruits fading; but the duties done by renewed Conſcience, are fruits that grow pon a laſting root, and that is *Chriſt*; *Gifts ve their root in Nature, but Grace hath its oot in Chriſt*, and therefore the weakeſt Grace hall out-live the greateſt Gifts and Parts; beauſe there is life in the root of the one, and ot in the root of the other; Gifts and Grace iffer like the leather of your Shooe, and he Skin of your Foot. Take a pair of ſhooes, hat have the thickeſt Soles, and if you go uch in them, the Leather weareth out, and n a little time a mans foot cometh to the ground; but now a man that goeth barefoot all his days, the Skin of his feet doth not were out; why ſhould not the Sole of his foot ſooner wear out than the Sole of his ſhooe? for the Leather is much thicker than he Skin? the reaſon is, becauſe there is life n the one, and not in the other; there is ife in the Skin of the foot, and therefore hat holdeth out, and groweth thicker and hicker, harder and harder; but there is o life in the Sole of his ſhooe, and there- *Anſw.*

fore that weareth out, and waxeth thinner and thinner; so it is with Gifts and Grace.

Now then, if I decay and abate, and grow weary of a Profession, and fall away at last; if I begin in the Spirit, and end in the Flesh, then was all I did from a *Natural Conscience*; but if I grow and hold out, if I *persevere to the end, and my last Works be more than my first*, then I act from a *renewed Conscience*.

And thus I have in seven things answered that Question, *viz.* if Conscience may go thus far in putting a man upon Duties, then what difference is there between this Natural Conscience in Hypocrites and sinners, and renewed Conscience in Believers?

And that is the first Answer to the main Query; *viz. Whence is it that many Men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians?*

It is to Answer the *call of Conscience*.

Secondly; *It is from the power of the Word under which they live*; tho' the Word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of sinners to reform them, though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim discriminationis*, a discerning, discovering power, *Heb.* 4 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul & spirit, & of the joynts and marrow, & is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This is the Glass where every Man may see what manner of Man he is; as the light of the Sun discovers the little Motes, so the light of the Word shining into Conscience, discovers little sins.

2. The Word hath *vim legislativam*, the power of a Law; it gives Law to the whole Soul, binds Conscience; it is therefore frequently called the Law in Scripture; *unless*

thy

thy Law had been my delight, &c. *To the Law* Pſal. 119.
and to the Teſtimony; this is ſpoken of the 29.
whole Word of God, which is therefore cal- *Iſa.* 8 20.
led a Law, becauſe of its binding power upon the Conſcience.

3. It hath *vim judicativam*, a judging power, *Joh* 12.48. *The word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him at the laſt day*; the Sentence that God will paſs upon ſinners hereafter, is noother than what the Word paſſeth upon them here. The judgement of God, is not a day wherein God will paſs any new Sentence, but is ſuch a day wherein God will make a ſolemn publick ratification of the Judgment paſſed by the Miniſtry of the Word upon Souls here; this I gather clearly from *Mat.* 18.18. *Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on Earth ſhall be bound in Heaven, & whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven*; ſo that by bringing a mans heart to the Word, & trying it by that, he may quickly know what that ſentence is that God will paſs upon his ſoul in the laſt day; for as the judgment of the word is now, ſuch will the judgment of God be concerning him at the laſt day.

Indeed there is a two-fold power further than this, in the Word.

It hath { *Vim Plaſticam*, and *Vim Salvificam*.

A begetting and ſaving power; but this is put forth only upon ſome.

But the other is more extenſive, and hath a great cauſality upon a profeſſion of goodneſs, even among them that have no grace.

A man that is under this three-fold power of diſcerning Law and Judgment, that hath his heart *ranſacked* and diſcovered, his Conſcience *bound* and *awed*, his ſtate and ſinful

condition *judged* and *condemned*, may take up a resolution of a new life, and convert himself to a great Profession of Religion.

Thirdly, *A man may go far in this course of Profession from affectation of applause & credit, & to get a name in the World*, as it is said of the *Pharisees*, *They love to pray in the Market-places, and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men.* Mat. 6 6.

Many are of *Machiavels* principle, that the appearance of virtue is to be sought; because tho' the use of it is a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerome in his Epistle to *Julian*, calls such *popularis aurae vilia mancipia*, the base *lond-slaves* of common Fame. Many a man doth that for credit, that he will not do for conscience; and owns *Religion* more for the sake of *lust*, than for the sake of Christ; thus making *God's* stream to turn the *Devil's Mill*.

Fourthly, *It is from a desire of Salvation*: There is in all men a desire of Salvation; it is natural to every being, to love & seek its own preservation; *Who will shew us any good?* *Psal.* 4. 6. This is the Language of Nature, seeking happiness to its self.

Many a man may be carried so far out in the desires of Salvation, as to do many things to obtain it.

So did the *young man*, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* He went far, and did much, obeying many commands, and all out of a desire of Salvation. So then, put these together, and there is an answer to that question.

The Call of Conscience,
The Power of the Word,
The Affectation of Credit; And,
The Desire of Salvation.

These

These may carry a man so far as to be almost a Christian.

The third Question propounded, is this:

Thirdly, *Whence is it that many are but almost Christians, when they have gone thus far? What is the cause of this?* Quest.

I might multiply answers to this Question; but I shall instance in two only, which I judge the most material. *Answ.*

First, *It is for want of right and sound Conviction.* If a man be not throughly convinced of sin, and his heart truly broken, whatever his Profession of Godliness may be, yet he will be sure to miscarry; every work of conviction is not a through work; there are convictions that are only natural and rational, but not from the powerful work of the Spirit of God.

Rational Conviction, *is that which proceeds from the working of a natural conscience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of those naked & worst, those comon principles of reason that are in all men.* This is the conviction you read of, Rom. 2. 14, 15. It is said, that the *Gentiles* who had not the Law, yet had their *consciences bearing witness, & accusing, or excusing one another*; tho' they had not the *light of Scripture*, yet they had convictions from the *light of Nature. Now* by help of the Gospel-light, these *convictions* may be much *improved*, & yet the *heart* not *renewed.* Rational *Conviction* what?

But then there is a spiritual conviction; & this is that work *of the Spirit of God upon the sinners heart by the word, whereby the guilt and filth of sin is fully discovered, & the woe & misery of a natural state distinctly set home upon the conscience, to the dread and terror of the sinner, whilst he abides in that state and condition.* Spiritual *Conviction* what?

And this is the Conviction that is a sound & through

through work: Many have their Convictions but not this *Spiritual Conviction*,

Query. Now you'll ſay, *Suppoſe I am at any time under Conviction, How ſhall I know whether my convictions be only from a natural Conſcience, or whether they be from the Spirit of God?*

Anſw. I ſhould digreſs too much to draw out the Solution of this Queſtion to its juſt length: I ſhall therefore in Five things only lay down the moſt conſiderable difference between the one and the other.

1. *Natural Convictions reach chiefly to open and ſcandalous ſins*, ſins againſt the light of Nature; *for natural Conviction can reach no further than natural Light.*

But *Spiritual Convictions* reach *to ſecret, inward, and undiſcerned* Sins, *ſuch as Hypocriſie, Formality, Lukewarmneſs, Deadneſs, and Hardneſs of Heart*, &c.

Obſerve then, whether your Trouble for ſin looks *inward* as well as *outward*; and reaches not only to open ſins, but to ſecret luſts, to inward and ſpiritual ſins; and if ſo, this is a ſure ſign of the work of the *Spirit*, becauſe the trouble occaſioned by theſe ſins, bears a more immediate relation to the Holineſs of God who only is offended by them, they being ſuch as none elſe can ſee or know.

2. *Natural Convictions deal only with a man's converſation*, not with his ſtate & condition, with ſins actual, not original, but *ſpiritual convictions* reach to all ſins; to ſins of the Heart, as well as ſins of Life; to the ſin of our Nature, as well as the ſins of Practice: to the ſin that is born in us, as well as the ſin that is done by us.

Where the *Spirit* of the *Lord* cometh to work effectually in any Soul, he holdeth the glaſs of the

the *Law* before the ſinners eyes, & openeth his eyes to look into the glaſs, & to ſee all that deformity & filthineſs that is in his heart & nature.

The Apoſtle *Paul* ſaid, *I had not known ſin, but by the Law*, Rom. 7. 7. How can this be true, that he had not known ſin, but by the *Law*, when as the light of Nature diſcovers ſin? It is ſaid, of the *Gentiles, that having not the Law, they are a Law unto themſelves.* Rom. 2. 14.

This ſin therefore that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, is not to be underſtood of ſin actual, but of ſin original; I had not known the pollution of Nature, that fountain of ſin that is within, this I had not known but by the Law; and indeed this is a diſcovery that natural light cannot make. It is true, the Phyloſopher could ſay πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα κακῶν ἐπιθυμία ἐστιν, that luſt is the firſt & chief of all ſins, but I cannot think he meant it of *original* ſin, but of the *inordinancy of appetite, and deſire at moſt*; for I find that the wiſeſt of the Phyloſophers underſtood nothing of original ſin; hear *Seneca, Eras ſi tecum vitia naſci putas, ſupervenerunt, ingeſta ſunt*; ſin is not born with thee, but brought in ſince. *Tam ſine vitio, quam ſine virtute naſcimur.* *Timon apud Laertium.*

Quintilian ſaith, It is more marvel that any one man ſins, than that all men ſhould live honeſtly, ſin is ſo againſt the nature of men; how blind were they in this point! and ſo was *Paul*, till the Spirit of the Lord diſcovered it to him by the Word. And indeed, this is a diſcovery proper to the Spirit. It is he that makes the ſinner ſee all the deformity and filthineſs that is within; it is he that pulleth off all the Sinners raggs, and makes him ſee his naked and wretched condition; it is he that ſhews us the *blindneſs*

of

of the Mind, the stubbornness of the Will, the disorderedness of the Affections, the searedness of the Conscience, the plague of our Hearts, and the sin of our Natures, and therein the desperateness of our state.

3. *Natural Convictions carry the Soul out to look more on the evil that comes by sin, than on the evil that is in sin*; so that the Soul under this Conviction is more troubled at the dread of Hell, and Wrath, and Damnation, than at the vileness and hainous nature of sin.

But now *spiritual Convictions* work the Soul into a greater sensibleness of the evil that is in sin, than of the evil that comes by sin; the dishonour done to God by walking contrary to his will, the wounds that are made in the heart of Christ, the grief that the Holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the Soul more than a thousand Hells.

4. *Natural Convictions are not durable, they are quickly worn out*; they are like a slight cut in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is sore for the present, but is healed again, and in a few days not so much as a scar to be seen.

But *spiritual Convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide in the Soul till they have reached their end, (which is, the *change* of the *sinner.*)

The *Convictions of the Spirit* are like a deep wound in the flesh, that goes to the bone, and seems to endanger the life of the Patient, & is not healed but with great skill; & when it is healed, leaves a scar behind it, that when the Patient is well, yet he can say, *Here is the mark of my wound, which will never wear out.*

Una eademque manus vulnus opemq; tulit.

So a Soul that is under *spiritual Conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed, but by

y the great skill of the heavenly Physician; & hen it is healed, there are the tokens of it re- aining in the Soul, that can never be worn ut; so that the Soul may say, *Here are the arks & signs of my Conviction still in my Soul.*

5. *Natural Convictions make the Soul shy of God:* Guilt works fear, & fear causes estranged- es. Thus it was with *Adam*, when he saw is nakedness, he ran away and hid himself om God. *Gen.* 3.8.

Now spiritual Convictions drive not the soul om God, but unto God. *Ephraim*'s Convicti- n was spiritual, & he runs to God, *Turn thou e and I shall be turned.* So that there is, you e, a great difference between *Conviction* and *onviction*; between that which is natural, & hat which is spiritual; that which is common, nd that which is saving. *Jer.* 31.3

Yea such is the difference, that though a an hath never so much of the former, yet he be without the latter, he is but *almost a hristian*, & therefore we have great reason to nquire more after this *spiritual conviction.* For,

1. *Spiritual Conviction is an essential part of ound Conversion.* Conversion begins here; rue *Conversion* begins in *Convictions*, and true *onvictions* end in *Conversion.*

Till the Sinner be convinced of sin, he an never be Converted from sin. Christ's omming was as a Saviour to die for sinners; nd the Spirit's comming is to convince us as nners, that we may close with Christ as a aviour. Till sin be throughly discovered to , interest in the Blood of Christ cannot ghtly be claimed by us; nay, so long as n is unseen, Christ will be unsought. *They at are whole need not the Physician, but they that re sick.* *Mat.* 9.12

2. *Slight*

2. *Slight and common Convictions,* (when they are but ſkin deep) *are the cauſe of much Hypocriſie*; ſlight Convictions may bring the Soul to claſp about Chriſt, but not to cloſe with Chriſt, and this is the guiſe of an Hypocrite: I know no other riſe and ſpring of Hypocriſie, like this of ſlight Convictions. This hath fill'd the *Church* of Chriſt with *Hypocrites*.

Nay, it is not only the ſpring of Hypocriſie, but it is alſo the ſpring of *Apoſtaſie*: What was the cauſe that the *ſeed was ſaid to wither away?* Mat. 13. 5, 6. It was becauſe *it had no deepneſs of Earth.* Where there is through conviction, there is a *depth of Earth* in the heart & there the *ſeed of the Word grows*; but where convictions are ſlight and common, there the ſeed withers for want of depth; ſo that you ſee clearly in this one inſtance, whence it is that many are but *almoſt Chriſtians,* when they have gone ſo far in Religion; *viz.* for want of ſound Convictions. *Mat.* 13. 5, 6.

Secondly, And this hath a near relation to the former; *It is for want of a through work of Grace firſt wrought in the Heart.* Where this is not, all a mans following Profeſſion comes to nothing. That Scholar will never like to read well, that will needs be in his *Grammar*, before he is out of his *Primer*. Cloath that is not wrought well in the Loom, will never wear well, nor wear long, it will do little ſervice; ſo that Chriſtian that doth not come well off the Loom that hath not a through work of Grace in his heart, will never wear well, he will ſhrink in the wetting, and never do much ſervice for God. It is not the pruning of a bad Tree will make it bring forth good fruit; but *Mat.* 13. 20, 21.

the Tree must be made *good*, before the fruit can be good, *Mat.* 12. 33.

He that takes up a Profession of Religion with an unbroken heart, will never serve Christ in that Profession with his whole heart.

If there be not a true change in that Mans heart, that yet goes far, and does much in the ways of God, to be sure he will either die an Hypocrite or an Apostate.

Look, as in nature, if a Man be not well born, but prove crooked or mis-shapen in the Birth, why he will be crooked as long as he lives; you may bolster or stuff out his cloaths to conceal it, but the crookedness, the deformity remains still; you may hide it, but you can't help it; it may be covered, but it cannot be cured.

So it is in this case; if a Man come into a Profession of Religion, but be not right born; if he be not *begotten of God*, & *born of the spirit*; if there be not a through work of Grace in his heart, all his Profession of Religion will never mend him. He may be bolstered out by a life of duties, but he will be but an Hypocrite at last, for want of a through work at first; a form of Godliness may cover his Crookedness, but will never cure it. *Joh.* 3.5.

A Man can never be a true Christian, nor accepted of God, though in the highest Profession of Religion, without a work of Grace in the heart. For,

1. *There must be an Answerableness in the frame of that Mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the Duties done by him*; his spirit and affections within, must carry a proportion to his Profession without. Prayer without Faith, Obedience to the Law given, without Fear and Holy Reverence of the Law

Law-giver, God abhors; Acts of *internal* worſhip muſt anſwer the duties of *external* Worſhip.

Now where there is no grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or anſwerableneſs in the frame of that Mans Heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Thoſe duties that find acceptance with God, muſt be done in ſincerity.* God doth not take our duties by tail, nor judge of us according to the *frequency of our performances*, but according to the ſincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doer, and the duty to God; with ſincerity, God accepts the leaſt we do; without ſincerity, God rejects the moſt we *do*, or can *do*. This is that temper of *ſpirit* which God highly delights in, *Prov.* 1 *Chron.* 29. 17. 11. 20. *They that are of a froward heart, are an abomination to the Lord, but ſuch as are upright in the way, are his delight.*

The Apoſtle gives it a great *Epithete*, he calls it in 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. εἰλικρινείᾳ Θεοῦ, the *ſincerity of God*, that is, ſuch a *ſincerity* as is his *ſpecial work upon the Soul*, ſetting the Heart right and upright before him in all his ways.

This is the *Crown of all our Graces*, and the Commendation of all our *Duties*. Thouſands periſh, and go to Hell in the midſt of all their performances and duties, meerly for want of a little ſincerity of heart to God.

Now where there is not a *change of ſtate*, a *Work of Grace* in the Heart, there can be no *ſincerity to God-ward*; for this is not *quid proveniens à naturâ*, it is not an Herb that grows in *Nature's Garden*. The *Heart* of Man is naturally *deceitful, and deſperately* Jer 17. 9.

h

wicked, more opposite to *sincerity*, than any thing: As things corrupted carry greater dissimilitude to what they were, than to any thing else which they never were.

God made Man upright; now man voluntarily losing this, is become more dislike to himself than to any thing below himself; he is more like a Lyon, a Wolf, a Bear, a Serpent, a Toad, than to a man in Innocency.

So that it is impossible to find *sincerity* in any soul till there be a Work of Grace wrought there by the Spirit of God: & hence it is that many man is but *almost a Christian* when he hath done all.

The fourth Question.

4. *What is the reason that men go no further in the profession of Religion, than to be almost Christians?*

1. *It is because they deceive themselves in the truth of their own condition*; They mistake their state, & think it good and safe, when it is bad and dangerous: A man may look upon himself as a member of Christ, & yet God may look upon him as a vessel of wrath; As a Child of God by looking more upon his sins than his graces, more upon his failings than his faith, more upon *indwelling lusts*, than *renewing grace*, may think his case very bad, when yet it is very good: *I am black*, saith the Spouse, Cant. 1. 5. and yet saith Christ, *O thou fairest among women*, ver. 8. So the sinner by looking more upon his duties than his sins, may think he sees his *Name written in the Book of Life*, and yet be in the account of God a very reprobate. Reason 1.

There is nothing more common; than for a

a man to *thing himſelf ſomething when he is no*
Gal. 6.3. *thing*, and ſo he *deceives himſelf*. Many a man
bleſſes himſelf in his intereſt in Chriſt, when he
is indeed a ſtranger to him. Many a man thinks
his ſin pardon'd, when alas he is ſtill in the *gall*
Acts 8 23 *of bitterneſs, and bond of iniquity*. Many a man
thinks he hath grace when he hath none. *That*
Pro. 13 7. *is* (ſaith *Solomon*) *that makes himſelf rich, and*
yet hath nothing. This was the very temper of
Laodicea; *Thou ſayeſt I am rich, and encreaſed*
with goods, and have need of nothing; *and know-*
Rev. 3.17 *eſt not* (pray mind that) *that thou art wretch-*
ed, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and na-
ked.

Thou knoweſt not;] as bad as ſhe was, ſhe
thought her ſtate *good*; As poor as ſhe was in
grace, ſhe thought ſhe was rich; *As miſerable*
and naked as ſhe was, yet ſhe thought ſhe had
need of nothing.

Now there are ſeveral riſes or grounds of
this miſtake.

I'll name five to you.

Supplan-
tativum
cor præ
omni.
First, *The deſperate deceitfulneſs of the heart*
of every natural man, Jer. 17. 19. *The heart*
is deceitful above all things: The *Hebrew* is
עקב חלב טבל; the word (עקב) is the
ſame with *Jacobs* name; Now you know he
Gen. 27. 36. was a ſupplanter of his Brother *Eſau*; he is
rightly called *Jacob* (ſaith he) *for he hath ſup-*
planted me theſe two times.

So the Word ſignifies, to be *fraudulent, ſub-*
tile, deceitful, and *ſupplanting*. Thus is the
heart of every natural man, עקב טבל *de-*
ceitful above all things.

Pſ. 52.4. You read of the deceitfulneſs of the
Tongue.

Mat 13.22 And of the deceitfulneſs of *Riches*.

Prov. 31. 30. And of the deceitfulneſs of *Beauty*.

And

And of the deceitfulness of *Friends.* *Job* 6.15.
But yet the heart is deceitful above them
. Nay, you read of the deceitfulness of Sa-
n, yet truely a mans heart is a greater de- *Rev.* 20.3
ver than he; for he could never deceive a
an. if his own heart did not deceive him.
Now it is from hence that a man presumes
on the goodness of his case, from the de-
rate treachery of his own heart.
How common is it for Men to boast of
e goodness of their hearts? *I thank God,*
ugh I do not make such a shew and pretence
some do, yet I have as good a heart as the best.
do but hear *Solomon* in this case; *he that* *Prov.* 28.
steth in his own heart is a fool. Will a- 26.
wise Man commit his Money to the Cut-
rse? Will he trust a Cheat? It is a good
le, μίμνησο ἀπιστεῖν, Remember to distrust;
d it was *Austin's* Prayer, *Domine libera*
a meipso. That Man that trusts to his own
art, shall be sure to find himself deceived
last.
Secondly, This Mistake arises from *the*
ide of a mans Spirit: There is a proud
art in every Natural Man: There was
ch of this Pride in *Adam's* sin, and there
much of it in all *Adams* Sons; it is a ra-
al sin, and from hence arises this over-
ening Opinion of a Mans State and Con-
ion. *Solomon* saith, *Be not righteous over-* Eccles. 7.
ch. *Austin* speaking occasionally of those 16. *Aug.*
rds, saith, It is not *justitia sapientis,* but *Sent.* 365
erbia præsumentis; not meant of the righ-
usness of the wise Man, but of the *Pride*
the presumptuous Man. Now in this
se, every carnal Man is Righteous over-
ch, though he hath none of that Righte-
sness which commends him to God, *viz.*

the

the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt. yet it hath too mu of that *Righteouſneſs* which commends him himſelf, and that is ſelf-righteouſneſs.

A proud man hath an eye to ſee his *beau* but not his *deformity*; his *parts*, but not h *ſp ts*; *his ſeeming righteouſneſs*, but not his *wretchedneſs*.

It muſt be a work of Grace that muſt ſhew a the want of grace. The *haughty* eye looks u wards, but the humble eye looks dow wards; and therefore this is the Believe Motto; *The leaſt of Saints, the greateſt of S ners*; but the carnal Man's Motto is, *I th God I am no as other Men.*

Eph. 3.8. 1 Tim. 1 15 Luk. 18.11

Thirdly, *Many deceive themſelves with co mon Grace, inſtead of ſaving, through that re blance that is between them.* As many take co terfeit mony for currant Coyn, ſo do too ma take common grace for true, *in ſimilibus fac eſt deceptio. Saul* took the Devil for *Samuel*, cauſe he appeared in the Mantle of *Samuel*; many take common grace for ſaving, beca it is like ſaving grace; A man may be under ſupernatural work, and yet fall ſhort of a ſa ving work; The firſt raiſeth nature, the ſeco only reneweth nature: Though every ſavi work of the Spirit be ſupernatural, yet eve ſupernatural work of the Spirit is not ſaving And hence many deceive their own Soul by taking a *ſupernatural Work* for a *ſavi Work*.

1 Sam. 28. 14.

Fourthly, *Many miſtake a profeſſion of R ligion for a work of converſion, and out-ſide r formation for a ſure ſign of inward regenera*

If the out-ſide of the cup be waſhed, th they think all is clean, though it be never foul within. This is the common *Rock* ſo many Souls ſplit upon, to their eter haza

zard, taking up a form of *godlineſs, but deny-*
g the power thereof.

Fifthly, *Want of a home Application of the* 2 Tim. 3. 5
w of God to the Heart and Conſcience, to diſ-
ver to a man the true ſtate and condition he is
.

Where this is wanting, a man will ſit down
ort of a true *work of Grace*, and will reckon
s Caſe *better than it is.* That is a notable
aſſage which the Apoſtle hints concerning
imſelf; *I was alive without the Law once, but* Rom. 7. 9.
en the Commandment came, ſin revived, and
yed.

Here you have an account of the *different*
prehenſions Paul had of his condition *with* and
ithout the Word.

1. Here is his apprehenſion of his condition
ithout the Word, *I was alive* (ſaith he) *with-*
t the Law; *Paul* had the *Law*, for he was a Phil. 3. 5,
harijee, and they had the *form of knowledge*, 6.
d of the truth of the Law; therefore when he Ro. 2. 20.
ith, he was *without the Law*, you muſt not
ke him literally, but ſpiritually: He was
ithout the power and efficacy of it upon his
eart and Conſcience, convincing and awaken-
ng, and diſcovering ſin; and ſo long as this
as his Caſe, he doubted not of his ſtate,
e was confident of the goodneſs of his con-
ition. This he hinted when he ſaith, *I was*
live; but then,

2. Here is his apprehenſion of his Condi-
ion with the Word, and that is quite con-
rary to what it was before; *When the Com-*
andment came, (ſaith he) *then ſin revived,*
nd I dyed.

When the Word of the Lord came with
ower upon his Soul, when the Spirit of
God ſet it home effectually upon his Conſci-
ence,

ence, that is meant by the coming of th
Commandment, then ſin revived, & I dyed; th
is, I ſaw the deſperateneſs of my caſe, and th
filthineſs of all my ſelf-righteouſneſs.

Then my hope ceaſed, and my confiden
failed; and as before I thought my ſelf alive
and my ſin dead; ſo when God had awakene
Conſcience by the Word, then I ſaw my ſ
alive and powerful, and my *ſelf dead and m*
ſerable.

So that this is the firſt Reaſon why Me
go no further in the profeſſion of Religion
than to be *almoſt Chriſtians.*

It is becauſe they miſtake their ſtate, an
think it good when it is not; which miſta
is five-fold.

A deceitful Heart.
A proud Spirit.
Taking common Grace for ſaving.
Outward Reformation for true Regeneration.
Want of home-Application of the Law of Go
to the Heart and Conſcience.

Reaſ. 2. 2. *It is from Satans cunning, who if he ca*
not keep ſinners in their open prophaneneſs, th
he labours to perſwade them to take up with
form of Godlineſs. If he cannot entice them
on in their luſts, with a total neglect of Hea
ven, then he entices them to ſuch a Profeſ
ſion as is ſure to fall ſhort of Heaven. He
will conſent to the leaving ſome ſin, ſo a
we do but keep the reſt; and to the doing
ſome Duties, ſo as we neglect the reſt; Nay
rather than part with his intereſt in the Soul
he will yield far to our Profeſſion of Reli
gion, and conſent to any thing but our Con
verſion, and cloſing with Chriſt for Salvation.
He cares not which way we come to Hell, ſo
as he gets us but thither at laſt.

3. *It*

It is from worldly and carnal Policy: This is a great hindrance to many; *Policy* many times enters *Caveats* against *Piety*. *Jehu* will not part with his *Calves*, lest *he hazard his Kingdom*. *Reas.* 3.

Among many men there would be more zeal and honesty, were there less design and policy. There is an honest policy that helps Religion; but carnal policy hinders it.

We are commanded *to be wise as Serpents*; *Mat.*10.16
now *the Serpent is the subtilest of creatures*; but *Gen.*3.1.
then we must be *innocent as Doves*. If *Piety* be without *Policy*, it wants *security*. If *Policy* be without *Piety*, it wants *integrity*. *Piety without Policy is too simple to be safe*; *and Policy without Piety is too subtile to be good.*

Let men be as wise, as prudent, as subtil, as watchful as they will, but then let it be in the way of God, let it be joyned with holiness and integrity.

That is a cursed wisdom that forbids a man to launch any farther out in the depth of Religion, than he can see the Land, lest he be taken in a storm before he can make safe to shoar again.

4. *There is some lust espoused in the heart, that hinders a hearty close with Christ*; though they bid fair, yet they come not to God's terms. The *young man would have eternal life*, and he bid fair for it, a willing Obedience to every Command but one; but only one; and will not God abate him one? Is he so severe? Will he not come down a little in his terms, when a man rises so high? Must man yield all? Will God yield nothing? *Reas.* 4. *Mat.* 19. 20.

No, my Brethren, he that underbids for Heaven, shall as surely lose it, as he that will

give

give nothing for it. He that will not give
Mat. 13. 45, 46. he hath, *part with all for that Pearl of Pri*
shall as surely go without it, as he that nev
once cheapens it.

The not comming up to Gods terms, is t
ruine of thousands of souls; nay, it is that u
on which all that perish, do perish; A nak
sinner, to a naked Christ; a bleeding brok
sinner, to a bleeding broken *Christ*; these a
Gods terms.

Most Professors are like Iron between t
equal Load-stones; *God* draws, and the pr
pend towards *God*; and the *World* draws, a
they incline to the *World*; they are betwe
both, they would not leave God for t
World, if they might not be engaged to le
the World for God.

But if they must part with all, with ev
lust, every darling, every beloved sin, w
2 *Tim.* 4. 10. then the spirit of *Dæmas* possesses them, a
God is forsaken by them.

My Brethren, this is the great reason w
many that are come to be almost Christians,
no farther; some one beloved lust or other h
ders them, and after a long and high Profe
on, parts them and Christ for ever; they
run well, but here it is that they give out, a
Gal. 5. 7. after all fall short, and perish to Eternity.

Thus having answered these four questio
viz.

1. *How far a man may go in the way to H
ven, and yet be but* almost a Christian.

2. *Whence it is that a man goeth so far a
be* almost a Christian.

3. *Whence it is that a man is but* almost
Christian *when he hath gone thus far.*

4. *What is the reason men go no farther in R
ligion, than to be* almost Christians.

I pr

I proceed now to the Application.

1. *That Salvation is not ſo eaſie a thing as it is imagined to be*; this is atteſted by our Lord Chriſt himſelf, *Mat.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.* The *gate of Converſion* is *a very ſtrait gate*, and yet every man that would be ſaved eternally muſt enter in at this *ſtrait gate*, for Salvation is impoſſible without it. *Except a man be born again*, (ἄνωθεν born from above) *he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.* Inſer. 1. *Joh.* 3. 3.

Not that this Gate is ſtrait ſimply, and in reſpect of it ſelf; no, for Converting grace is free; *the gate of mercy ſtands open all the day long.* In the tenders of Goſpel-grace none are excluded, unleſs they exclude themſelves; *Chriſt* doth not ſay, *If ſuch and ſuch will come to me, I will not caſt them out*; but, *Him that cometh unto me* (be he who or what he will, *if he hath a heart to cloſe with me*) *I will in no wiſe caſt him out*: He hath not, *if this or that man will, here is water of life for him*; but, *if any man will, let him take the water of life freely.* Chriſt grudgeth mercy to none: Though ſalvation was dearly purchaſed for us, yet it is freely *proffered* to us. *Mat.* 22. 3, 5. *Acts* 13. 46. *Joh* 6. 37 *Re.* 22. 17

So that the *Gate which leadeth to life*, is not ſtrait on Chriſt's part, or in reſpect of his ſelf, but it is ſtrait in *reſpect* of us, becauſe of our luſts and corruptions, which makes the entrance difficult; a Needles Eye is big enough for a *thred* to paſs through, but it is a ſtrait paſſage for a Cable Rope; either the *Needles* Eye muſt be enlarged, or the Cable Rope muſt be untwiſted, or the entrance is impoſſible. So it is in this caſe, the Gate of Converſion is a very ſtrait paſ-

ſage for a carnal corrupt ſinner to go in at; the Soul can never paſs through with any one luſt beloved and eſpouſed; and therefore the ſinner muſt be untwiſted from every luſt; he muſt lay aſide the love of every ſin, or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a ſtrait gate. And when he is in at this ſtrait gate, he meeteth with a narrow way to walk in; ſo our Lord Chriſt ſaith, *narrow is the way that leadeth to life*; and what way is this, but the way of Sanctification? *For without holineſs no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord.* *He* 12.14.

Now this way of Sanctification is a very narrow way, for it lies over the neck of every luſt, and in the exerciſe of every Grace, ſubduing the one, and improving the other, dying daily, and yet living daily, dying to ſin, and living to God; this is the way of Sanctification: And Oh how few are there that walk in this way! The broad way hath many Travellers in it, but this narrow way is like the ways of *Canaan*, in the days of *Shamgar*; it is ſaid, Judg. 5. 6. *In the days of* Shamgar *the Son of* Anah, *the high ways were unoccupied, and the Travellers walked through by-ways*; In the *Hebrew* it is אורחות עקלקלות *through crooked ways*; *the way of holineſs* is by the moſt an unoccupied way; ſo ſaith the Prophet, *Iſa.* 35. 8, 9. *A way ſhall be there, and it ſhall be called the way of holineſs, the unclean ſhall not paſs over it*; *no Lion ſhall be there, nor any ravenous beaſt ſhall go up thereon*; *but the redeemed ſhall walk there*; the unclean, and the Lyon, and the ravenous Beaſt, they are in the crooked ways, none but the Redeemed of the Lord walk in the way of the Lord.

It is no wonder then, that our Lord Chriſt ſaith

faith of life, that *few there be that find it*, when as the *gate is strait*, and the *way narrow* that leadeth to it: Many pretend to walk in the *narrow way*, but they never entred in at the *strait gate*; and many pretend to have entered in at the *strait gate*, but they walk not in the *narrow way*.

Adcœlestia Regnum duci debucunt.

It is a very common thing for a man to perish upon a mistake of his way, to go on in those paths that take hold of Hell, and yet hope to find Heaven at last. Those twenty paths fore-mentioned run into destruction, & yet many choose them, and walk in them as the way of Salvation. As many profane and open Sinners perish by choosing the *way of death*, so many formal professors perish by *mistaking the way of life*. This I gather from that our Lord Christ saith, *Few there be that find it*; which doth clearly imply what in *Luke* 13. 24. he doth plainly express, *viz.* that many seek it; *many seek to enter in, and yet are not able*; many run far, and yet do not so run as to obtain; Many bid fair for the *Pearl of Price*, and yet go without it; Hell is had with ease, but the *Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence*, Mat. 11. 12.

1 Cor. 9. 24. *Facilis descensus Averni; sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras, Hic labor hoc opus est.*

2. *If many go thus far in the way to Heaven, and yet miscarry, Oh then what shall be the end of them who fall short of these!* If he shall perish who is *almost a Christian*, what shall he do who is not *at all a Christian?* If he that owneth Christ, and professeth Christ, and leaveth many sins for Christ, may be damned notwithstanding; What then shall his doom be that disowneth Christ, and refuseth to part with one sin, one lust, one Oath for Christ; *nay*, that *openly* blasphemeth the precious name of Christ! If

Infer. 2.

he that is *outwardly ſanctified*, ſhall yet be eternally rejected; what will the caſe be of ſuch as are *openly unſanctified*, that have not only the *plague of an hard heart* within, but alſo the *plague ſore of a prophane life* without? If the *formal Profeſſor* muſt be ſhut *out*, ſurely then the *filthy Adulterer*, *ſwiniſh Drunkard*, *the deep Swearer*, *the prophane Sabbath-breaker*, the *foul-mouth'd Scoffer*, yea, and every *carnal Sinner much more*; If there be a *woe to him that falleth ſhort of Heaven*, then how *ſad is the woe to him who falls ſhort of them that fall ſhort of Heaven?* Ah that God would make this an awakening word to ſinners that are aſleep in ſin, without the leaſt *fear of Death*, or *dread of Damnation*.

Uſe of Examination. Are there many in the World that are *almoſt*, and yet but *almoſt Chriſtians?* Why *then it is time for us to call our condition into queſtion, and to make a more narrow ſcrutiny into the truth of our ſpiritual eſtate*, what it is, whether it be right or no; whether we are ſound and ſincere in our profeſſion of Religion, or no. When our Lord Chriſt told his Diſciples, *One of you ſhall betray me*, every one began preſently to reflect upon himſelf, *Maſter is it I? Maſter is it I?* So ſhould we do, when the Lord diſcovers to us from his word, how many there are under the Profeſſion of Religion, that are but almoſt Chriſtians, we ſhould ſtraight way reflect upon our hearts, *Lord is it I?* Is my heart unſound? Am I but *almoſt a Chriſtian?* Am I one of them that ſhall miſcarry at laſt? Am I an hypocrite under a profeſſion of Religion? Have I a form of godlineſs without the power.

There are two *queſtions* of very great importance, which we ſhould every one of us often put to our ſelves? *Whe-*

What am I?
Where am I?

1. *What am I?* Am I Child of God, or not? Am I sincere in *Religion*, or am I only an hypocrite under a profession?

2. *Where am I?* Am I yet in a natural state, or a state of grace? Am I yet in the old root, in old *Adam*, or am I in the root Christ Jesus? Am I in the Covenant of Works that ministers only wrath and death? Or am I in the Covenant of Grace, that ministers life and peace?

Indeed this is the first thing a man should look at. There must be a change of state, before there can be a change of heart. We must come under a change of Covenant, before we can be under a change of condition; for the *new Heart*, & the *new Spirit* is promised in the *new covenant?* There is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*, now a man must be under the *new covenant*, before he can receive the blessing promised in the *new covenant*. He must be in a *new covenant state*, before he can receive a *new covenant heart*. No Mercy, no Pardon, no Change, no Conversion, no Grace dispensed out of Covenant; therefore this should be our great enquiry; for if we know not *where* we are, we cannot know *what* we are; and if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we should be, *viz. altogether christians*. Let me then, I beseech you, press this duty upon you that are *Professors*, try *your own hearts, examine your selves whether you are in the Faith, prove your own selves*. I urge this upon most cogent arguments. *Ezek.* 36 36. 2 Cor. 13. 5.

1. *Because many rest in a notion of Godliness, and outward shews of Religion, and yet remain in their natural condition*; Many are Jam. 1. 22

hearers of the Word, but not *doers of it*, and so *deceive their own souls*. Some neither *hear* nor *do*, these are *prophane sinners*; some both *hear* and *do*, these are *true believers*; some *hear*, but they do not *do*, these are *Hypocritical Professors*.

He that slights the Ordinances, cannot be a true Christian, but yet it is possible a man may own them and profess them, and yet be no true Christian; who would trust to a profession, that shall see *Judas* a Disciple, an Apostle, a Preacher of the Gospel, one that cast out Devels, to be cast out himself? *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, & not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* Rom 2.28

2. *Because Errors in the first Foundation are very dangerous*; If we be not right in the main, in the fundamental work; if the Foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession comes to nothing. The *House* is *built* upon a *sandy Foundation*, and though it may *stand* for a *while*, yet *when the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it.* Mat. 7.17

3. *Because many are the deceits that our Souls are liable to in this case.* There are many things like grace, that *are not grace*; now it is the likeness and similitude of things that deceives, and makes one thing to be taken for another. *In similibus facilis est deceptio.*

Many take *gifts* for *grace*, *common knowledge* for *saving knowledge*; when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace; great knowledge, and yet not know Jesus Christ.

Some take *common faith* for *saving*; When as

as a man may believe all the truths of the Goſpel, all the Promiſes, all the Threatnings, all the Articles of the Creed to be true, and yet periſh for want of ſaving faith.

Some take *morality* and *reſtraining grace*, for *piety* and *renewing grace*: When as it is common to have ſin much reſtrained, where the heart is not renewed.

Some are deceived with a *half-work*, taking *conviction* for *converſion*, *reformation* for *regeneration*; we have many Mermaid-Chriſtians;

Deſinit in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne.

Or like *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Image, Head of Gold, and Feet of Clay; the Devil cheats moſt men by a *Synecdoche*, putting a part for the whole; Partial Obedience to ſome commands, for univerſal Obedience to all. Endleſs are the deluſions that Satan faſtens upon Souls, for want of this ſelf-ſearch It is neceſſary therefore that we try our ſtate, leſt we take the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and embrace a cloud inſtead of *Juno*. *Dan.* 2. 22 23.

4. *Satan will try us at one time or other*; He'll winnow us, and ſift us to the bottom; and if we now reſt in a groundleſs confidence, it will then end in a comfortleſs deſpair. *Lu.* 22. 31

Nay, God himſelf will ſearch and try us at the day of Judgment eſpecially, and who can abide that tryal, that never tryes his own heart?

5. *Whatſoever a mans ſtate be, whether he be altogether a Chriſtian or no, whether his Principle be ſound or no, yet it is good to examine his own heart*; If he find his heart good, his principles right and ſound, this will be a matter of rejoycing; If he find his heart rotten, his principles falſe and unſound, *Gal.* 6. 4.

the discovery is in order to a renewing; if a man have a disease upon him, and know it, he may send to the Physician in time, but what sad vexation will it be, not to see a disease till it be past cure? So for a Man to be Graceless, and not see it till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not, and that he is in the right way to Heaven, when he is in the ready way to Hell, and yet not know it till a death-bed, or a judgment day confute his confidence; this is the most irrecoverable misery.

These are the grounds upon which I press this duty of examining our state; O that God would help us in the doing this necessary duty!

Quest. You'd say, *But how shall I come to know whether I am almost, or altogether a Christian?* If a man may go *so far*, and yet *miscarry*, How shall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a *Christian indeed.*

Answ. 1. *The altogether Christian closes with, and accepts of Christ upon Gospel-Terms.* True *Union* makes a *true Christian*: Many close with Christ, but it is upon their own terms; they take him and own him, but not as God offers him. The termes upon which God in the Gospel offers Christ, are, that we shall accept of a broken Christ with a *broken Heart*, and yet a whole Christ with the *whole Heart.*

A broken Christ with a *broken Heart*, as a witness of our *Humility*; a *whole Christ* with a *whole Heart*, as a witness of our *sincerity.* A *broken Christ* respects his *suffering for sin*; a *broken Heart* respects our *sense of sin*; a *whole Christ* includes *all his Offices*; a *whole Heart* includes *all our faculties.* Christ is a *King*, *Priest* and *Prophet*, and all as Mediator;

tor; without any one of *theſe offices*, the *work of Salvation* could not have been *compleated*. As a Prieſt, he *redeems us*; as a Prophet, he *inſtructs us*; as a King, he *ſanctifies* and *ſaves us*. Therefore the Apoſtle ſays, *He is made to us of God, Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption*. Righteouſneſs and Redemption flow from him as a *Prieſt*, Wiſdom as a *Prophet*, Sanctification as a *King*.

Now many embrace Chriſt as a *Prieſt*, but yet they own him not as a *King* and *Prophet*; *they like to ſhare in his Righteouſneſs*, but not to *partake* of his holineſs; they would be redeemed by him, but they would not ſubmit to him; they would be ſaved by his blood, but not ſubmit to his power. Many love the privileges of the Goſpel, but not the duties of the Goſpel. Now theſe are but almoſt Chriſtians notwithſtanding their cloſe with Chriſt; for it is upon their own termes, but not upon Gods. The Offices of Chriſts may be diſtinguiſhed, but they can never be divided. *Lu.* 19. 27.

But the true Chriſtian owns Chriſt in all his Offices; He doth not only cloſe with him as *Jeſus*, but as *Lord Jeſus*; he ſays with *Thomas, My Lord, and my God*. He doth not only believe in the merit of his death, but alſo conforms to the manner of his life; as he believes in him, ſo he lives to him; He takes him for his wiſdom, as well as for his righteouſneſs; for his ſanctification as well as his redemption. *John* 20. 28.

2. *The altogether chriſtian hath a through work of Grace and Sanctification wrought in the heart, as a ſpring of duties.* Regeneration *is a whole change*; *all old things are done away, and all things become new*. It is a perfect 2 *Cor.* 5. 17.

fect work as to parts, though not as to degrees. Carnal men do duties, but they are from an unſanctified heart, and that ſpoiles all. A *new* *Mat.*9.16 *piece of cloath* never doth well *in an old garment*, for the *rent is but made worſe*. When a mans heart is throughly renewed by grace, the mind ſavingly enlightned, the *Conſcience* throughly convinced, the Will truely humbled and ſubdued, the Affections ſpiritually raiſed and ſanctified, and when Mind, and Will, and Conſcience, and Affections, all joyn iſſue to help on with the performance of the Duties commanded; then is a man *altogether a Chriſtian*.

3. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian, looks to the manner, as well as to the matter of his duties*: Not only that they be done, but how they be done. He knows the Chriſtians privileges lie in *Pronouns*, but his duty in *Adverbs*; it muſt not be only *bonum, good*, but it muſt be *bene*, that good muſt be rightly done.

Here the *almoſt Chriſtian* fails, he doth the ſame duties that others do for the matter, but he doth them not in the ſame manner; while he minds the ſubſtance, he regards not the circumſtance: If he pray, he regards *Ja.* 5.16. not *faith* and *fervency* in Prayer; if he hear, he doth not mind Chriſt's Rule, *Take heed* *Luk.*8.18. *how you hear*; if he obeys, he looks not to *Rom.*6.17 the frame of his heart in obeying, and therefore miſcarries in all he doth. *Bonum oritur ex integra cauſa, malum ex quolibet defectu*; any of theſe defects ſpoil the good of every duty.

4. *The altogether Chriſtian is known by his ſincerity, in all his performances*. Whatever a man does in the duties of the Goſpel, he cannot be a Chriſtian without ſincerity. Now

the

the *almost Christian* fails in this, for though he doth much, prays much, hears much, obeys much, yet he is an hypocrite under all.

5. *He that is altogether a Christian, hath an answerableness within to the Law without.* There is a *connaturalness* between the *Word of God*, and the *Will of a Christian*; his heart is (as it were) the *Transcript of the Law*; the same *Holiness* that is *commanded in the Word*, is *implanted in his Heart*; the same conformity to Christ, that is enjoyned by the *Word of God*, is wrought in the Soul by the *Spirit of God*: The same *Obedience* which the *Word requireth of him*, the Lord enableth him to *perform*, by his *Grace bestowed on him*. This is that which is promised in the *New covenant, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their Hearts*, Jer. 31. 33. *Heb* 9.10. & 10. 16. Now the writing his Law in us, is nothing else but his working that Grace and Holiness in us which the Law commandeth and requireth of us.

In the *Old Covenant-Administration*, God wrote *his Laws* only upon *Tables of Stone*, but not upon the Heart; and therefore, though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the *New Covenant-Administration*, God provides new Tables; *not Tables of Stone, but the Fleshly Tables of the Heart*, and writes his Laws there, that there might be νόμος ἔγγραπτος, a *Law within* answerable to the *Law without*; and this every true Christian hath; so that he may say in his measure, as our Lord Christ did; *I delight to do thy Will, O my God, thy Law is within my heart.* Every Believer hath a *light within* him, not guiding him to despise & slight, but to prize and walk by the *light without* him; the *Word* commands

2 Cor 3. 3.

Psa. 40. 8

commands him to *walk in the light*, & the *light* directs him to *walking according to the Word*.

Moreover from this *impression of the Law* upon the Heart, *Obedience* and *Conformity* to God becomes the *choice* and *delight* of the Soul: for Holiness is the very *nature* of the *new Creature*; so that if there were *no Scripture*, no *Bible* to guide him, yet he would be *holy*, for he hath received *grace for grace*; there is a *grace* within to answer to the *word of grace* without. Joh. 1. 16

Now the *almost Christian* is a stranger to this *Law of God* within, he may have some conformity to the Word in *outward Conversation*, but he cannot have this answerableness to the Word in *inward Constitution*.

6. *The altogether Christian is much in Duty, and yet much above duty: Much in Duty*, in regard of *Performances*; *much above duty*, in regard of *dependance*; *much in duty* by obeying, but *much above duty* by believing: He lives in his Obedience, but he doth not live upon his Obedience, but upon *Christ*, and his *Righteousness*.

The *almost Christian fails in this*: He is much in *duty*, but not *above it*, but rests *in it*; he works for *rest*, and he rests in his *works*; he cannot come to believe and obey too; if he believes, then he thinks there is no need of Obedience, and so casts off that; if he be much in Obedience, then he casts off Believing, & thinks there is no need of that: He cannot say with *David*, *I have hoped for thy Salvation, and done thy Commandments*. Psal. 119. 166.

The more a man is *in duty*, and the more *above it*; the more in *doing*, and more in *believing*; the *more a Christian*.

7. He

7. *He that is altogether a Christian, is universal in his Obedience*, he doth not obey one command, & neglect another; do one duty, & cast off another; but hath a respect to all the commands, he endeavours to leave *every* sin, & love every duty. *Ps.* 119. 6.

The *Almost Christian* fails in this, his obedience is partial and piece meal; if he obeys one command, he breaks another; the duties that cast cross his lust, he is much in; but those that do, he lays aside.

The *Pharisees fasted, prayed, paid Tithes*, &c, but they did not lay aside their *covetousness*, their *oppression*; they *devoured Widdows Houses*, they were *unnatural to Parents*. *Mat.* 23. 23. *Mat.* 23. 14.

8. The *altogether Christian make Gods glory the chief end of all his performances*; If he prays, or hears, or gives, or fasts, or repents, or obeys, &c. Gods glory is the main end of all: It is true, he may have somewhat else at the hither end of his work, but God is at the further end; As *Moses's Rod* swallowed up the *Magicians Rods*, so Gods glory is the ultimate end that swallows up all his other ends. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this, his ends are corrupt and selfish; *God* may possibly be at the hither end of his work, but self is at the further end; for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself.

Now then, examine thy self by these characters, put the *question* to thy own Soul, dost thou close with *Christ* upon Gospel terms? is *grace* in the *heart* the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within; to the law without? art thou much above duty, when much in duty?

duty? Is thy Obedience universal? Lastly Gods Glory the end of all? If so, then art th not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

2 Use of Caution. *O take heed of being almost, and yet but almost a Christian*; it is a great complaint God *against* Ephraim, *that he is a cake* Hos. 7. 8. *turned*; that is *half baked*, neither raw *Neq; crudus, neque coctus.* *roasted* ὔτε ψυχρὸς ὔτε ζεστὸς, neither cold hot, as *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 17. *Because thou neither hot nor cold, therefore I will spue thee out my mouth.*

This is a condition that of all others is { *Greatly unprofitable.* / *Exceedingly uncomfortable.* / *Desperately dangerous.*

First, *It is greatly unprofitable to be but almost a Christian*: for failing in any one point, w ruine us as surely as if we had never made a attempts for Heaven. It is no advantage the soul to be almost converted; For the lit that we want, spoils the good of all our attai ments: we say, as good never a whit as ne *Deus non vult cum exceptione coli.* the nearer; *Ad nihilum valet quod non valet finem suum*; there is no profit in leaving thi that sin, unless we leave all sin; *Herod* hea *John* gladly, and did many things, but he lik his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. *Jud* did many things, *prayed* much, preached muc professed much, but yet his *covetousness* spoile all; one sin ruined the young man that h kept all the commands but one. Thus he th Jam. 2. 10 *offends in one point is guilty of all.* That is th lives willingly and allowedly in any one sin, brings the guilt of the violation of the whol Law of God upon his Soul, and that upon twofold account.

1. Because he manifests the same contem of the authority of God, in the wilful breach one, as of all.

2. B

2. By allowing himſelf in the breach of any one command, he ſhews he kept none in Obedience & Conſcience to God, for he that hates ſin as ſin, hates all ſin, & he that obeys the Command as the expreſs Will of God, obeys every Command. And for this cauſe, the laſt ſin willingly, and with allowance lived in, ſpoils the good of all our Obedience, and lays the Soul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a Ship may ſink her, though ſhe be right every where elſe; Gideon *had ſeventy Sons, and but one Baſtard*, and yet that one *Baſtard deſtroyed all his Sons*; ſo may one ſin ſpoil all our ſervices, one luſt beloved may ſpoil all our profeſſion, as that one Baſtard ſlew all the Sons of *Gideon*. *Ju.* 8.33, 35. *compa. with c.* 9. *ver.* 5.

Secondly, *It is exceeding uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that ſuch a one is hated of God and Men*, the World hates him, becauſe *of his profeſſion*, and God abhors him, becauſe of his *diſſimulation*; the *World* hates him, becauſe he *ſeems good*, & God hates him, becauſe he *doth but ſeem ſo*. No perſon that God hates more than the *almoſt Chriſtian*; *I would thou wert either cold or hot, either all a Chriſtian*, or not at *all a Chriſtian*. *Becauſe thou art neither cold nor hot, therefore I will ſpew thee out of my mouth.* What a loathſome expreſſion doth God here uſe, to ſhew what an utter abhorrency there is in him againſt luke-warm Chriſtians? Rev. 3.15, 16. *Tepida evomere conſuevimus, unde ad vomitum ciendum quidam aqua tepida utuntur.* Druſ.

How uncomfortable then muſt that condition needs be, wherein a man is abhorred both of God and Man?

2. *It is uncomfortable in regard of ſufferings*; *for being almoſt a Chriſtian*, will bring us into ſuffering, but being but *almoſt a Chriſtian*

stian will never carry us through suffering. *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. It is said, *He that receiveth seed into stony ground, the same is he that hears word, and with joy receives it*; *yet hath he not r in himself, but dureth for a while*; *for when Tr bulation or persecution ariseth because of the wor by and by he is offended.*

There are four things observable in t words.

1. That the stony ground may receive th word with joy.

2. That it may for some time abide in a Pro fession of it; *he dureth for a while.*

3. That this Profession will expose to su fering; for mark, *Persecution* is said to *arise b cause of the word.*

4. This suffering will cause an apostatizi from Profession, for that which is here calle *offence*, is in *Luke* 8. 13. called *falling aw which for a while believe, and in time of tem tation fall away.*

I gather hence, a Profession may expose man as much to suffering, as the power o Godliness; but without the Power of Godli ness, there is no holding out in a Profession un der suffering. The World hates the shew o Godliness, and therefore persecutes it; *The al most christian wants the substance, and therefor cannot hold out in it.*

Now this must needs be very uncomfortable If I profess Religion, I am like to suffer; If I do but profess it, I am never like to endure.

3. *It is uncomfortable in regard of that deceit it lays our hopes under*; to be deceived of our hopes causeth sorrow as well as shame: He that is but *almost a christian* hopes for Heaven, but unless he be *altogether a christian*, he shall never come there. Now

Now to periſh with hopes of Heaven, to go Hell by the Gates of Glory, to come to the ry door, and then be ſhut out, as the five irgins were, to die in the Wilderneſs, within ght of the promiſed Land, at the very brinks *Mat.* 25. 10. *Jordan*, this muſt needs be ſad; to come with a ſtride of the Goal, and yet miſs it, to ſink ithin ſight of Harbour, oh how uncomforta- e is this!

4. *As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceeding uncomfortable to be but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſo it deſperately dangerous:* For,

1. *This doth* obicem ponere, *it hinders the true ork:* A man lies in a fairer capacity for Con- erſion that lies in open enmity and Rebellion, han he that ſooths up himſelf in the formali- es of Religion. This I gather from that Parable f the two Sons which our Lord Chriſt urged o the profeſſing *Scribes and Phariſees*, Mat. 21. 8.

There was a man had two Sons, and he came *Mat.* 21. *one, and ſaid, Go, work to day in my Vineyard;* 28. *to* 32. *e ſaid, I will not; but afterwards repented and ent.*

And he came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe, and e ſaid, *I go Sir, but went not.*

The firſt repreſents the carnal open ſinner, hat is called by the Word, but refuſes; yet after- ards repents, and believes. The ſecond repre- ents the hypocrytical Profeſſor, that pretends uch, but performs little; Now mark how Chriſt applies this parable, *ver.* 31. *Verily I ſay nto you, that the* Publicans *and the* Harlots *go in- o the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to e at all, than to be almoſt a Chriſtian, for he almoſt hinders the altogether. It is bet- er (in this regard) to be a ſinner without a Profeſſion,

Profession, than to be a Professor without C
version; for the one lies fairer for an inw
change, when the other rests in an outwa
Our Lord Christ tells the *Scribe*, Mark 12.
Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God,
never like to come there. None farther fr
the Kingdom of God, than such as are not
from the Kingdom of God; as for instance, wi
there lies but one lust, one sin between a S
and Christ, that Soul is not far from Chri
but now when the Soul rests in this near
to Christ, and yet will not part with that
Lust for Christ, but thinks his condition
cured, though that lust be not subdued? w
is farther from the Kingdom of God th
he?

So our Lord Christ tells the young m
Mark 10. 21. *One thing thou lackest*; w
he was very near Heaven, near being a Ch
stian altogether, he was almost saved;
tells Christ he had kept all the Comman
Ver 20. He lacked but *one thing*, I s
but one thing; but it was a great thi
that one thing he lacked, was more than
Luke 42. things he had, for it was the *one thing nece*
it was a new heart; a work of Grace in
Soul, a change of state, a heart weaned fr
the World; I, this was the one thing, and
that lacks this one thing, perishes with hi
things else.

2 *This condition is so like a state of Gra*
that the mistake of it for Grace, is easie a
common; and it is very dangerous to mist
any thing for Grace that is not Grace;
in that a man contents himself, as if it w
Grace. Formality doth often dwell ne
door to Sincerity, and one Sign serves bo
and so the House may be easily mista

d by that means a man may take up his ging there, and never find the way out ain.

What one saith of Wisdom, (*Multi ad sa-ntiam perveniſſent, niſi ſe jam perveniſſe pu-ſent*; Many might have been wise, had they t thought themselves so, when they were erwise) the same I may say of Grace; ma- a formal Professor might have been a sin-re Believer, had he not mistook his Professi- for Conversion, his Duties for Grace, and rested in that for sincerity, that is but Hy-crisie.

3. *It is a degree of Blasphemy to pretend to grace, d yet have no grace.* I gather this from that v. 2. 9. *I know the Blasphemy of them which say y are Jews, and are not.* This place under-es varieties of Constructions; *Grotius* and *æus* do not make their Blasphemy to lye in eir saying, *they are Jews, and are not*, but lye in the reproaches that these *Jews* fast-d upon Christ, calling him *Impostor, Decei-r, one that hath a Devil*, &c.

Brightman goes another way, and saith, this s the Blasphemy of these *Jews* they retained at way of Worship that was abrogated; & rust upon God, those old *Rites* & *Ceremonies* hich Jesus Christ had abolished, & *nailed to Cross*, by which they overthrew the glory *Col.* 2. 14. Christ, and denied his coming.

But I conceive the Blasphemy of these ws to lye in this, that *they said they were ws, and were not.* A *Jew* here is not to taken literally and strictly only, for one the lineage of *Abraham*, but it is to be ken *Metonymically*, for a true Believer, e of the Spiritual Seed of *Abraham*; *He is Jew which is one inwardly*, so that for a man

man to say he is a *Jew* when he is not, to p
fess an interest in Christ when he hath none
say he hath grace when he hath none,
Christ calls Blasphemy.

But why should Christ call this Blasphem
This is hypocrisie, but how may it be said t
Blasphemy? Why, he Blasphemes the gr
attribute of Gods omniscience, he doth im
citly deny that God sees and knows our he
and thoughts; For if a Man did believe
omniscience of God, that he searches the he
and sees, and knows all within, he would
dare to rest in a graceless Profession of Go
ness; This therefore is Blasphemy in the
count of Christ.

Bello pax ea deterior.

4. *It is dangerous to be almost a christian, that this stills & serves to quiet conscience.* N
it is very dangerous to quiet Conscience w
any thing but the Blood of Christ; it is bad
ing at peace, till Christ speaks peace. Noth
can truely pacifie Conscience, less than t
which pacifies God, and that is the blood of
Lord Christ. Now the almost Christian qui
Conscience, but not with the blood of Chri
It is not a peace flowing from Christs prop
ation, but a peace rising from a formal Pro
sion; not a peace of Christs giving, but a pe
of his own making. He silences and bri
Conscience with a form of Godliness, and
makes it give way to an undoing soul-destr
ing peace; He rocks it a sleep in the Cradle
duties, and then it is a thousand to one it ne
awaketh more till death or judgment.

Ah my Brethen, it is better to have Cons
ence never quiet, than quieted any way but
the Blood of sprinkling: A good Conscience u
quiet, is the greatest affliction to Saints, a
an evil Conscience quiet, is the greatest ju
ment to sinners.

. *It is dangerous to be almost a christian, in* *ect of the unpardonable sin.* The sin that the pture saith, *can never be forgiven, neither in world, nor in the world to come*; I mean *sin against the Holy Ghost.* Now such are y capable of sinning that sin, as are but al- t Christians. *Mat.* 12. 32.

A true believer cannot; the work of grace is heart, *that seed of God abiding in him*, se- s him against it, 1 *John* 3. 9. compared h *chap.* 5. 16, 17, 18.

The prophane, ignorant, open sinner can- ; tho' he lives daily & hourly in sin, yet he not commit this sin, for it must be from an ghtned mind; every sinner, under the *pel* especially, sins sadly against the Holy ost, against the strivings and motions of Spirit; He *resists the Holy Ghost, but yet is* not the sin *against the Holy Ghost.* *Act.* 7. 51.

There must be three ingredients to make up t sin.

. It must be wilful, *Heb.* 10. 26. *If we sin fully after we have received the knowledge of truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.*

. It must be against light & convictions, *af- we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

It must be *destinata malitia*, in *resolv'd malice.* w you shall find all these ingredients in the of the *Pharisees*, *Mat.* 12 22. Christ *heals* one t was *possessed with a Devil*, a great work ich all the people wondered at, *ver.* 23. But at say the *Pharisees?* see *v.* 24 *This fellow teth out Devils by the Prince of Devils.* Now at this was *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, is ar; for it was both willful & malicious, and *Blasphe- mia in Spiritum Sanctum ea est qua quis de- stinata malitia contra proprium imi sui sensum Spiritus Sancti gratiam & virtutem, Deiq; riam oppugnat.* Luc. Brug. in *Mat.* 12.

against

againſt clear convictions; They could not b
ſee that he was the Son of God, and th
this work was a peculiar work of the ſpirit
God in him, and yet they ſay he wrought
compare the Devil; whereupon Chriſt charges the
this with with this ſin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, ver. 31, 3
Mar 3. 33. Now the *Phariſees* were a ſort of gre
28,29,30 Profeſſors; whence I gather this concluſio
that it is the *Profeſſor* of Religion that is t
ſubject of this ſin; not the open carnal ſinne
not the true believer, but the *formal profeſſor*.

Not the ſinner, for he hath neither *light* n
grace; Not the Believer for he hath bo
light and *grace*; therefore the formal profe
ſor, for he hath *light* but no *grace*. Here th
is the great danger of being *almoſt a chriſti*
he is liable to this dreadful unpardonab
ſin.

6. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſu*
yets us to Apoſtaſie; He that gets no good
walking in the ways of God, will quickly lea
them, and walk no more in them; this I g
ther from, *Hoſ.* 14. 9. *Who is wiſe, and he ſh*
underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſh
know them? for the ways of the Lord are righ
the juſt ſhall walk in them, but the tranſgreſſo
ſhall fall therein.

The juſt ſhall walk in them;] he whoſe he
is renewed and made right with God, he ſh
keep cloſe to God in his ways.

But the tranſgreſſor ſhall fall therein;] t
פשעים word in the *Hebrew* is *peſhangim*, from a wo
that ſignifies to *prevaricate*. So that we m
read the words thus, *The ways of the Lord a*
right, & the juſt ſhall walk in them, but he th
prevaricates, that is an hypocrite in the w
of God, he ſhall fall therein.

An unſound heart will never hold o
lon

g in the ways of God, *Joh.* 5. 35. *He was rning and a ſhining light, and ye were willing a ſeaſon to rejoyce in that light.*

For a ſeaſon,] πρὸς ὥραν for *an hour*, a ſhort e, and then they left him. It is a notable ſtion *Job* puts concerning the Hypocrite, *l he delight himſelf in the Almighty? Will he ys call upon God?* *Job* 27. 10.

e may do much, but theſe two things he ot do.

He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot perſevere in duties at all times, and ll conditions.

He will be an Apoſtate at laſt: The *ſcab of ocriſie* uſually breaks out in the *plague-ſore Apoſtaſie*; Converſion-ground is ſtanding-und, it is *terra firma*, but a graceleſs *profeſ-* of Religion is a ſlippery ground, and falling und. *Julian* the Apoſtate, was firſt *Julian* Profeſſor. I know it is poſſible a Believer *Prov.* 24. fall, but yet *he riſes again, the Everlaſting* 26. *s are underneath*; but when the Hypocrite *Deut.* 33. s, who ſhall help him up? 27

olomon ſaith, *Wo to him that is alone when he s*, that is, without *intereſt* in Chriſt; Why to him? *For he hath none to help him up*: If *Ec.* 4. 10. us Chriſt do not recover him, who can? *Da-* fell and was reſtored, for he had one to help up; but *Judas* fell and periſhed, for he alone.

This being but almoſt a Chriſtian. provokes d to bring dreadful ſpiritual judgments upon a .

Barrenneſs is a ſpiritual judgment: Now s provokes God to give us up to barren-ſs: When Chriſt found the Fig-tree that leaves, but no fruit, he pronounces the ſe of *barrenneſs* upon it: *Never fruit grow* *Ma.* 21. 9

on

on the more: And ſo *Ezek.* 47. 11. *The miry places thereof, and the marish places thereof, ſhall not be healed, they ſhall be given to ſalt.*

A ſpirit of deluſion is a ſad judgment; which this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment, that receives the truth, but not in the love of it; *becauſe* 2 *Theſ.* 2. 10, 11, 12. *they received not the love of the truth that they might be ſaved*; *for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions.*

To loſe either light, or ſight, either Ordinances, or Eyes, is a great ſpiritual judgment; *Luk.* 19. 42. why, this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment; he that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either light or ſight, either the Ordinances from before his Eyes, or elſe to blind his Eyes under the Ordinances.

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgment; and there is no hypocrite but he hath a hard heart.

My Brethren, it is a dreadful thing for God to give a man up to ſpiritual judgments.

Now this being almoſt a Chriſtian, provoke God to give a man up to ſpiritual judgments; ſurely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

8. *Being almoſt, and but almoſt Chriſtians will exceedingly aggravate our Damnation.* The higher a man riſes under the means, the lower he falls if he miſcarries; He that falls but a little ſhort of Heaven, will fall deepeſt into Hell; He that hath been neareſt to Converſion, being not Converted, ſhall have the deepeſt Damnation when he *Mat.* 11. 23, 24. is Judged. *Capernaums* ſentence ſhall exceed *Sodoms* for ſeverity, becauſe ſhe exceeded *Sodom* in the enjoyment of mercy; She received more from God. She knew

more of God. She professed more for God, and yet was not right with God, therefore she shall be punished more by God. The higher the rise, the greater the fall; the higher the PROFESSION, the lower the damnation: He miscarrieth with a light in his hand, he perisheth under many convictions, and convictions never end but in a sound conversion, as in all Saints; or in a sad damnation, as in all Hypocrites: Praying ground, hearing ground, professing ground, and conviction ground, is of all, the worst ground to perish upon.

Now then, to sum up all under this Head.

If to be almost a Christian hinders the true work of Conversion: If it be easily mistaken for Conversion; if it be a degree of Blasphemy; if this be that which quiets Conscience; if this subjects a man to commit the unpardonable sin; if it lays us lyable to Apostacy; if it provokes God to give us up to spiritual Judgments; and if it be that which exceedingly aggravates our Damnation: Sure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almost, and but almost a Christian.

O labour to be altogether Christians, to go farther than they who have gone fartheſt, and yet fall short: This is the great Counsel of the Holy Ghost, *So run that you may obtain,* 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure,* 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

1. *This is that which is not only commanded by God, but that whereunto all the commands of God end:* A perfect Confirmity of Heart and Life to God, is the sum and substance of all the Commands both of the Old and New Testament. As the harlot was for the Consid. 1 1 Kin 3. 16, 26.

dividing of the Child, ſo Satan is for dividing the heart, he would have our love and affections ſhared between Chriſt and our Luſts; for he knows that Chriſt reckons we love him not at all, unleſs we love him above all. But God will have all or none; *My Son, give me thy heart*, Prov 23. 26. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, with all thy might*, Deut. 6 5.

Luk. 10. 27.

Look into the Scripture, and ſee what that is upon which your *only* ſtands, and you ſhall find, that God hath fixed it upon thoſe great duties, which alone tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians. God hath fixed your *only* upon believing, *Mar.* 5 36. *Only believe.* God hath fixed your *only* upon obedience, *Mat.* 4. 10. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*, Phil. 1. 27. *Only let your converſation be as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt*: So that your *only* is fixed by God upon thoſe two great Duties of *believing* and *obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians.

Now ſhall God command, and ſhall not we obey? Can there be a higher motive to duty, than the Authority of the Great God, whoſe will is the Eternal Rule of Righteouſneſs? O let us fear *God*, *and keep his Commandments*, for this is כל האדם the *totum hominis*, *the whole duty of man*; So we read it.

Conſid. 2

2. *The Lord Chriſt is a Saviour throughout, a perfect and compleat Mediator:* He hath not ſhed his Blood by halves, nor ſatisfied the Juſtice of God, and redeemed ſinners by halves; No, but he went through with his undertakings, he bore all our ſins, and ſhed all his Blood, he dyed to the utmoſt, ſatisfied

fied the Juſtice of God to the utmoſt, Redeemed ſinners to the utmoſt, and now that he is in Heaven, he intercedeth to the utmoſt, and is able to ſave to the utmoſt. *Heb.* 7. 25.

It is obſerved, that our Lord Chriſt when he was upon the Earth, in the days of his Fleſh, he wrought no *emi plenam curationem*, no halfcures, but whomſoever they brought to him for healing, he healed them throughout, *Mat.* 14. 35, 36. *They brought unto him all that were diſeaſed, and beſought him that they might only touch the hem of his Garment, and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.*

Oh what an excellent Phyſitian is here! none like him; he cureth, { *Infallibly*, *Suddenly*, *Perfectly*.

He cureth *Infallibly*; none ever came to him for healing, that went without it; He never practiſed upon any that miſcarried under his hand.

He cureth *Suddenly*; no ſooner is his Garment touched, but his Patient is healed *The Leper*, Mat. 8. 3. is no ſooner touched, but immediately cured; the two blind men, *Mat.* 20. are no ſooner touched, but their eyes are immediately opened, *ver.* 34. *Mar.* 1. 31. & 2. 12. *Luk.* 8. 41.

He cureth *perfectly*; *As many as were touched, were made perfectly whole.* *Mat.* 14. 36.

Now all this was to ſhew what a perfect & ompleat Saviour Jeſus Chriſt would be to all inners that would but come to him. They hould find healing in his blood, vertue in his ighteouſneſs, and pardon for all their Sins, whatever they were; Look as Chriſt healed all he diſeaſes of all that came to him when he was *earth*, ſo he pardons all the ſins, & healeth all he wounds of all thoſe Souls that come to him ow he is in Heaven.

He is a Saviour throughout, and ſhall not we be Saints throughout? ſhall he be altogether a Redeemer, and ſhall not we be altogether Believers? Oh what a ſhame is this!

Conſid. 3 3. *There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Chriſtians*, and that whether we reſpect profit or comfort, for Grace brings both.

Firſt, *Religion is a gainful thing*; and this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling Motive, that becomes effectual upon all. Gain is the *God* whom the World worſhips; what will not men do, what will they not ſuffer for gain? What Journeys do men take by Land, what Voyages by Sea, through hot and cold, through fair and foul, through ſtorm and ſhine, through day and night, and all for gain.

Now there is no Calling ſo gainful as this of Religion; It is the moſt profitable imployment we can take up. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things*, 1 Tim. 4. 1 It is μέγας πορισμὸς, a great Revenue; if it be cloſely followed, it brings in the greateſt income; indeed ſome men are religious for the Worlds ſake, ſuch ſhall be ſure not to gain; but they who are religious for Religions ſake, ſhall be ſure not to loſe, if Heaven and Earth can recompence them; for *Godlineſs hath the promiſe both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*.

Ah, who would not be a Chriſtian, when the gain of Godlineſs is ſo great! Many gain much in their worldly Calling, but the profit which the true Believer hath from one hours Communion with God in Chriſt, weigheth down all the gain of the World: Curſed be that man who counts all the gain of the world worth one hours Communion with Je-

ſus

ſus Chriſt, ſaid that noble Marqueſs *Galeacius Caracciola*. It is no where ſaid in Scripture, Happy is the man that findeth Silver, and the man that getteth fine Gold: Theſe are of no weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary; but it is ſaid, *Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom, and the man that getteth underſtanding; for the Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold.* Prov. 3. 13, 14.

By *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding* here, we are to underſtand the *Grace of Chriſt*, and ſo the Spirit of God interpreteth it, *Job* 28. 28. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Now of all Merchants, he that trades in this *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding*, will prove the richeſt man; one *grain of godlineſs* outweigheth all the *gold of Ophir*: There is no Riches like being *rich in grace*; For,

1. This is the *moſt neceſſary Riches*, other things are not ſo, *ſilver and gold are not ſo*; we may be, and be happy without them: There is but one thing neceſſary, and that is, *The grace of Jeſus Chriſt* in the Heart; have this, and have all; want this, and want all.

2. *It is the moſt ſubſtantial gain*; the things of this VVorld are more *ſhadow* than *ſubſtance*; Pleaſure, Honour, and Profit, comprehend all things in this VVorld, and therefore are the carnal mans Trinity Luk. 16. 11.

Ambitioſus honos, & opes, & fœda voluptas,
Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus habet.

The Apoſtle *John* calls them, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life*; *this* (ſaith he) *is all that is in the World*, and truly if this be all, all is nothing, for what is pleaſure but a dream and conceit? 1 John 2. 19.

what is honour, but fancy and opinion? and what is profit, but a thing of nought? *why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?* Prov. 23. 5. The things of the World have in them no solid subsistence, though fooliſh carnal men call them substance.

ראינכי *Et non existunt.*

But now Grace is a substantial good; so our Lord Christ calls it, *Prov.* 9. 21. *That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance,* להנחיל יש *to inherit that which is.* Grace is a reallity, other things are but shew and fancy.

3. *Godliness is the safest gain.* The Gain of Worldly things is always with difficulty, but seldom with safety: The Soul is often hazarded in the over-eager pursuit of worldly things; nay thousands do pawn and lose, & damn their precious Souls eternally for a little Silver and Gold, which are but the Guts & Garbage of the Earth; *And what is a man profited to gain the whole World, if he lose his own Soul?* *Mar.* 8. 36.

But the gain of Godliness is ever with safety to the Soul, nay the Soul is lost and undone without it, and not saved but by the attainment of it; a Soul without Grace is in a lost and perishing condition; the hazard of Eternity is never over with us, until the Grace of Christ Jesus be sought by us, and wrought in us. 1 *Tim.* 6. 17.

4. *Godliness is the surest profit*; As it is safe, so it is sure; Men make great ventures for the World, but all runs upon uncertainties; many venture much, and wait long, and yet find no return but disappointment; they sow much, & yet reap nothing.

But the *gain of Godliness* is sure, *Prov.* 11. 18. *To him that soweth righteousness, shall be a sure reward.*

And

And as the things of this World are uncertain in the getting, ſo they are uncertain in the keeping.

Non minor eſt Virtus quam quærere parta tueri.

If Men do not undo us, Moths may; if Robbery doth not, Ruſt may; if Ruſt doth not, Fire may; to which all earthly treaſures are incident, as our Lord Chriſt teaches us, *Mat.* 6. 19. *Solomon* limneth the World with wings, *Prov.* 23. 5. *Riches make themſelves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards Heaven.* A man may be rich as *Dives* to day, and yet poor as *Lazarus* to morrow; Oh how uncertain are all worldly things!

Habent non alas paſſerinas ſed aquilinas.

But now the true treaſure of Grace in the heart, that can never be loſt; It is out of the reach both of Ruſt and Robber; *He that gets the World, gets a good he can never keep; but he that gets Grace, gets a good he ſhall never loſe.*

5. *The profit of Godlineſs lyeth not only in this World, but in the World to come.* All other profit lyeth in this World only, Riches and Honours, *&c.* are called this Worlds goods, but the Riches of Godlineſs is chiefly in the other Worlds goods, in the enjoyment of God and Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit, among Saints and Angels in Glory. Lo, this is the *gain of Godlineſs*; *ſuch honour have all his Saints.*

1 Tim. 4. 8. 1 Joh. 3. 17. Pſ. 149. 9.

6. *The gain of Godlineſs is a durable and eternal gain*; All this Worlds goods are periſhing, periſhing *pleaſures*, periſhing *honours*, periſhing *profits*, periſhing *comforts*; *Riches are not for ever*, ſaith *Job*, *Haſt thou entred into the treaſures of the Snow? Gregory* upon theſe words obſerves, that Earthly Treaſures are Treaſures of Snow. What pains do Chil-

Job 38. 22.

dren take to scrape and roul the *Snow* together to make a *Snow-ball*, which is no sooner done, but the heat of the Sun dissolves it, and it comes to nothing? Why, the treasures of worldly men are but *treasures of Snow*; when Death and Judgement come, they melt away; and come to nothing, *Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death*, Prov. 11. 4.

You see here the great advantage of Godliness: So that if we look at profit, we shall find enough in *Religion* to engage us to be *altogether Christians*. Or,

2. *If we look at comfort*, Religion is the most comfortable *Profession*; there are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of *Grace* and *Godliness*.

1. *Worldly comfort is only outward*, it is but skin-deep; *In the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful*, Prov. 14. 13. But now the *comfort* that flows from Godliness is an inward comfort, a spiritual joy; therefore it is called *gladness of heart*, Psal. 4. 7. *Thou hast put gladness into my heart*; other *joy smooths the brow*; but this fills the breast.

2. *Worldly Comfort hath a Nether Spring*; The spring of worldly comfort is in the creature in some earthly enjoyment, and therefore the comfort of worldly men must needs be mixed and muddy; *an unclean Fountain cannot send forth pure Water*: But spiritual comfort *hath an upper Spring*; the comfort that accompanies Godliness, flows from the manifestations of the love of God in Christ, from the workings of the blessed Spirit in the heart, which is first a *Counsellor*, and then a *Comforter*. And therefore the comforts of the Saints must needs be pure and unmixed

Jam. 3. 11.

ed comforts, for they flow from a pure Spring.

3. *Worldly comfort is very fading and transitory*; *The triumphing of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*; *Solomon* compares it to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, *Eccles.* 7. 6. which is but a blaze, and soon out; so is the comfort of carnal hearts; but now the comfort of Godliness is a durable and abiding comfort, *your heart shall rejoyce, and your joy no man shall take from you.* *Job* 20. 5 *Joh.* 16 22

The comfort of Godliness is lasting and everlasting; it abides by us, { *In Life,* *In Death,* *After Death.*

First, *It abides by us in Life*; *grace and peace* go together; Godliness brings forth *comfort* and *peace naturally*; *The effect of Righteousness shall be peace*; It is said of the primitive Christians, *they walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, Act. 9. 31. *Phil.* 1. 2. *Col.* 1. 2. *Isa.* 32. 17

Every duty done in uprightness and sincerity, reflects some comfort upon the Soul; *In keeping the commands there is great reward*, not only *for keeping* of them, but *in keeping* of them; as every *flower*, so every *duty* carries *sweetness* and *refreshing* with it. *Psal* 19. 11.

But who more dejected and disconsolate than Saints and believers, whose lives are more uncomfortable? whose mouths are more filled with complaints than theirs? If a condition of Godliness and Christianity, be a condition of so much comfort, then why are they thus? Object.

That the people of God are often times without comfort, that I grant; *They may walk in the dark, and have no light*: But this is none of the product of Godliness; Grace brings forth no such fruit as this; there is a three-fold rise and spring of it. *Sol.* *Isa.* 50. 10

Sin within.
Deſertion } without.
Temptation }

1. *Sin* within; The Saints of God are not all Spirit, and no Fleſh; all Grace, and no Sin; they are made up of contrary Principles; there is light and darkneſs in the ſame mind, ſin & grace in the ſame will, carnal and ſpiritual in the ſame affections; there is *the fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit* in all theſe, and too oft, the Lord knows, is the Believer led away captive by theſe warring luſts; ſo was the Holy Apoſtle himſelf, *I find then a Law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me*, Rom. 7. 21. *and* v. 23. *I ſee another Law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, & bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin*, and this was that which broke his ſpiritual peace, & filled his ſoul with trouble and complaints, as you ſee v. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death.*

Gal. 5. 17.

Rom. 7. 21

So that it is ſin that interrupts the peace of *Gods people*, indwelling luſt ſtirring & breaking forth, muſt needs cauſe trouble & grief in the ſoul of a Believer; for it is as natural for ſin to bring forth *trouble*, as it is for *grace* to bring forth *peace*; every ſin contracts *a new guilt* upon the *ſoul*, & *guilt* provokes *God*; & where there is a *ſenſe of guilt* contracted, & *God* provoked, there can be no peace, no quiet in that ſoul, till Faith procures freſh ſprinklings of the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt upon the Conſcience.

2. *Another ſpring of the Believers trouble and diſconſolateneſs of ſpirit, is the deſertions of God*; and this follows upon the *former*; *God* doth ſometimes diſappear, and hide himſelf from his people, *Verily thou art a God that hideſt thy ſelf*, Iſa. 45. 15. But the cauſe of *Gods* hi-

Pſal. 13. 1

ding,

ing, is the Believers sinning. *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you,* Isa. 59. 2. In Heaven where there is no sinning, there is no losing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; and if Saints here could serve God without corruption, they should enjoy God without *desertion*; but this cannot be; while we are in this state, remaining lusts will stir and break forth, and then God will hide his Face; and this must needs be trouble; *Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled,* Psal. 30. 7.

The light of Gods countenance shining upon the Soul, is the Christians Heaven on this side Heaven; and therefore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face be looked upon by the Soul, as one of the days of Hell; so it was by *David, the sorrows of Death compassed me, the pains of Hell got hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow.* Psal. 116. 3.

3. *A third spring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of the Christians Spirit, is the temptations of Satan,* ὁ ἐχθρὸς, he is the great Enemy of Saints, and he envieth the quiet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his Conscience is brimmed with horror & terror; and therefore though he knows he cannot destroy their peace, yet he labours to disturb their peace. As the blessed spirit of God is first a Sanctifier, & then a Comforter, working grace in order to a peace, so this cursed spirit of Hell is first a *Tempter*, & then a *Troubler*; first perswading to act sin, & then accusing for sin; and this is his constant practice upon the Spirits of Gods people; he cannot endure that they should live in the light of Gods countenance, when himself is *doom'd* to Eternal, intolerable darkness. Mat. 13. 39.

And

And thus you see whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint; all arises from these three springs of,

Sin within.
Desertions } without.
Temptations }

If the Saints could serve God without sinning, and enjoy God without withdrawing, & resist Satan without yielding, they might enjoy peace and comfort without sorrowing; this must be endeavoured constantly here, but it will never be attained fully, but in Heaven.

But yet so far as Grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, and so far as the power of Godliness is exercised in the life, so far the condition of a Child of God is a condition of peace; for it is an undoubted Truth, *that the fruit of Righteousness shall be peace:* But suppose the people of God experience little of this comfort in this Life; yet,

2. *They find it in the day of Death*; Grace and Holiness will minister unto us then, and that Ministration will be peace; a Believer hath a two-fold spring of comfort, each one emptying it self into his Soul in a dying season; one is from above him, the other is from within him; the spring that runs comfort from above him, is the *blood of Christ sprinkled upon the Conscience*; the spring that runs comfort from within him, is the *sincerity of his heart in God's service*, when we lye upon a Death-bed, and can reflect upon our Principles and Performances in the service of God, and there find uprightness and sincerity of Heart, running through all, this must needs be comfort; it was so to *Hezekiah*, *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and*

d with a perfect heart, and have done that which good in thy ſight, Iſa. 38. 3

Nothing maketh a Death-bed ſo uneaſie & rd, as a life ſpent in the ſervice of ſin & luſt; othing makes a Death-bed ſo ſoft and ſweet, a life ſpent in the ſervice of God & Chriſt. r put the caſe the people of God ſhould not eet with this comfort then; yet,

3. *They ſhall be ſure to find it after death*; if me bring none of this fruit to ripeneſs, why et eternity ſhall; *grace in time will be glory n eternity*, holineſs *now* will be happineſs *then*; *hatever it is a man ſoweth in* this world, *that e ſhall be ſure to reap in the* next world; *He hat ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption*; *but he that ſoweth to the Spirit ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting.* When ſin ſhall end in ſorrow and miſery, holineſs ſhall end in joy and glory; *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Mat. 25. 23. Whoever ſhareth in the *grace of Chriſt*, and conformeth to the life of Chriſt in this World, ſhall ſhare in the joys of Chriſt in the world to come, and that joy is *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*; lo here, is the fruit of Godlineſs; ſay now, if there be not enough in Religion, whether we reſpect profit or comfort, to engage us to be *Chriſtians throughout.* *Gal.* 5.7. *Gal.* 6.8. *Rom.* 6. 23. 1 *Pet.* 1.8.

4. *What an intire reſignation wicked men make of themſelves to their Luſts*; *and ſhall not we do ſo to the Lord Chriſt? they give up themſelves* without Reſerve to the Pleaſures of ſin, and ſhall we have our Reſerves in the ſervice of God? they are altogether ſinners, and ſhall not we be *altogether Saints?* They *run, and faint not* in the ſervice of their luſts, and ſhall we *faint*, and *not run* in the ſervice of Conſid. 4 *Exod.* 21. 6.

*Exod.*21. 6. of Chriſt? ſhall the ſervants of corruption have their ears bored to the door-poſts of ſin, in token of an intire and perpetual ſervice, and ſhall we not give up our ſelves to the Lord Chriſt, to be his for ever? ſhall others make Iſa.28.15 a *Covenant with Hell and Death*, and ſhall not we *joyn our ſelves to God in an everlaſting Cove-* Jer.50.5. *nant that cannot be forgotten? Acrius illi ad perniciem, quam nos ad ſalutem?* ſhall they take more pains to damn their Souls, than we do to 2 *Tim.* 4. 8. ſave ours? and make more ſpeed to a place of *vengeance*, than we do to a *Crown of righteouſneſs.*

Which do you judge beſt, to be ſaved everlaſtingly, or to periſh everlaſtingly? which do you count the beſt Maſter, God, or the Devil? Chriſt, or your Luſts? I know you will determine it on Chriſts ſide; Oh then! when others *Ecc.* 8.11. ſerve their Luſts with all their hearts, do *you* *Jer.* 3. 5. ſerve *Chriſt*, with all *your hearts*; *if the hearts of the ſons of men be fully ſet in them to do evil*, then *much* more let the hearts of the ſons of God be fully ſet in them to do good.

Conſid.5 5. *If ye be not altogether Chriſtians, ye will never be able to appear with Comfort before God, nor to ſtand in the judgment of the laſt and great day?* for this ſad *dilemma* will ſilence every Hypocrite; if my *commands* were not *holy*, *juſt*, and *good*, why didſt thou *own them?* if they were *holy*, *juſt*, and *good*, why didſt thou not obey them? If Jeſus Chriſt was not worth the having, why didſt thou profeſs him? if he was, then why didſt thou not cleave to him, and cloſe with him? If my *ordinances* were not appointed to convert and ſave ſouls, why didſt thou ſit under them, and reſt in the performance of them? Or if they were, then why didſt thou not ſubmit to the power of them? If Religion be not

not good, why dost thou profess it? If it be good, why dost thou not practise it? *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding Garment?* If it was not a *wedding feast*, why didst thou come at the invitation? If it was, then why didst thou come without a *wedding Garment?* *Mat.* 22. 12.

I would but ask an *Hypocritical Professor of the Gospel*, what he will answer in that day. Verily you deprive your selves of all possibility of *Apology* in the day of the righteous *Judgment of God*. It is said of the man that had no Wedding Garment on, that when Christ came and examined him, *he was speechless*; he that is *graceless* in a *day of Grace*, will be *speechless in a day of Judgement*; professing Christ without a heart to close with Christ, *will leave our souls inexcusable*, and make our Damnation *unavoidable* and *more intolerable*. *Mat.* 11. 22.

These are the Motives to enforce the duty; and Oh that God would *set them home* upon your *Hearts* and *Consciences*, that you might not dare to rest a *moment longer* in a *half-work*, or in being *Christians within a little*, but that you might be *altogether Christians?*

But you will say possibly, How shall I do? what means shall I use that I may attain to a thorough work in my Heart, that I may be not longer almost, but altogether a Christian? Quest.

Now I shall lay down three rules of *direction*, in stead of many, to further and help you in this *important duty*, and so leave this work to God's blessing. *Answ.*

First, *Break off all false peace of conscience*; this is the Devils *bond* to hold *the Soul* from seeking after *Christ*. As there is the *peace of God*, so there is the *peace of Satan*; but they Direct. 1.

are

are eaſily known, for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell, as light and darkneſs.

The *peace of God* flows from a work of Grace in the Soul, and is the peace of a regenerate ſtate; but the *peace of Satan* is the peace of an unregenerate ſtate, it is the Peace of Death; in the grave. *Job* ſaith there is peace; *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling*; ſo a Soul dead in ſin is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not.

The peace of God in the Soul, is a peace flowing from removal of guilt, by juſtifying grace, *Rom.* 5. 1. *Being juſtified by faith in his blood, we have peace with God*; but the peace of *Satan* in the Soul, ariſes, and is maintained by a ſtupidneſs of Spirit, and inſenſibleneſs of guilt upon the Conſcience.

The peace of God is a peace *from ſin*, that fortifies the heart againſt it; *The peace of God that paſſeth all mens underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds thorough Chriſt Jeſus*, Phil. 4, 7. The more of this peace there is in the ſoul, the more is the Soul fortified againſt ſin; but the peace of Satan is peace in ſin; *The ſtrong man armed keeps the houſe, and there is all at peace*, Luk. 11. 21. The *Saints peace* is *a peace* with *God*, but not with *ſin*? the *ſinners peace* is *a peace* with *ſin*, but not with *God*; and this is a peace better broken than kept; it is a falſe, a dangerous, an undoing peace; my brethren, *death & judgment will break all peace of Conſcience* but only that which is *wrought* by *Chriſt* in the *ſoul*, and is the *fruit* of the *blood* of *ſprinkling*; *when he gives quietneſs who can make trouble?* Job 34. 29. *Now that peace that death will break*, why ſhould you keep? who would be *fond* of that *quietneſs* which the flames of Hell will burn in ſunder? and yet how many travel to hell thro' the fools Paradiſe of a falſe Peace!

Of

Oh break off this peace! for we can have no peace with God in Chriſt, whilſt this *peace* remains in our hearts; *Intus exiſtens prohibet alium.* The *Lord Chriſt gives no peace* to them that will not ſeek it; and that man will never ſeek it, that does not ſee his need of it; and he that is at peace in his Luſts, ſees no need of the *peace of Chriſt*. The *ſinner* muſt be *wounded for ſin*, & *troubled under it*, before Chriſt will *heal his wounds*, and give him peace from it.

2. *Labour after a through work of conviction*, every *conviction* will not do it; the *almoſt Chriſtian* hath his *conviction* as well as the *true Chriſtian*, or elſe he had never gone ſo far; but they are not ſound and right *convictions*, or elſe he had gone farther: God will have the *Soul* truly ſenſible of the *bitterneſs of ſin* before it ſhall taſte the *ſweetneſs of mercy*. The plow of conviction muſt go deep, and make deep furrows in the heart, before God will ſow the precious ſeed of Grace and Comfort there, that ſo it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the conſtant method of God, Firſt to ſhew man his ſin, then his Saviour; Firſt his danger, then his Redeemer; Firſt his wound, then his cure; Firſt his own vileneſs, then Chriſt's Righteouſneſs. We muſt be brought to cry out, *Unclean, unclean, to mourn for him whom we have pierced*, and then he ſets open for us a *fountain to waſh in for ſin, and for uncleanneſs*, Zach. 12. four laſt verſes compared with *Zach.* 13. 1. That is a notable place, *Job* 33. 27. 28. *He looked upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned & perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, & his life ſhall ſee the light.* The ſinner muſt ſee the unprofitableneſs of his unrighteouſneſs, before he profits by Chriſts righteouſneſs. Direct. 2

The

Numb. 21. 6, 8. The *Iſraelites* are firſt ſtung with the fiery Serpents, and then the brazen Serpent is ſet up. *Ephraim* is firſt throughly convinced, and then God's Bowels of Mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul*, *Manaſſeh*, the *Jaylor*, &c. So that this is the *unchangeable* Method of God in working Grace, to begin with Conviction of ſin.

Oh therefore *labour* for *through Conviction*; and there are three things we ſhould eſpecially be convinced of.

Firſt, *Be convinced of the evil of ſin*, the filthy and heinous nature of it; this is the greateſt evil in the world; it wrongs God, it wounds Chriſt, it grieves the Holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious Soul: all other evils are not to be named with this. My Brethren, though to do ſin is the worſt work, yet to ſee ſin, is the beſt ſight; for ſin diſcovered in its vileneſs, makes Chriſt to be deſired in his fulneſs.

But above all, labour to be convinced of the miſchief of an unſound heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruine it brings upon the ſoul. Oh think often upon the Hypocrites Hell, *Mat.* 14. 15.

Secondly, *Be convinced of the miſery and deſperate danger of a natural condition*; for till we ſee the plague of our hearts, and the miſery of our ſtate by nature, we ſhall never be brought off our ſelves to ſeek help in another.

Thirdly, *Be convinced of the utter inſufficiency and inability of any thing below Chriſt Jeſus to miniſter relief to thy ſoul in this caſe.* All things beſides Jeſus Chriſt are *Phyſitians of no value*; duty, performances, prayers, tears, ſelf-righteouſneſs, avail nothing in this caſe; they make us, like the Troops of *Tema*, to return *aſhamed at our diſappointment* from ſuch *failing Brooks*.

Job 13. 4.

Job 6. 19, 20.

Alas!

as! It is an infinite righteouſneſs that muſt
isfie for us, for it is an infinite God that is
ended by us. If ever thy ſin be pardoned, it
infinite mercy that muſt pardon it; if ever
u be reconciled to God, it is infinite merit
ſt do it; if ever thy heart be changed, and
ſtate renewed, it is infinite power muſt
ct it; and if ever thy Soul eſcape Hell,
be ſaved at laſt, it is *infinite Grace* muſt
e it.

In theſe three things right and ſound *Convi-*
n lyeth; and where-ever the Spirit of God
rketh theſe through Convictions, it is in or-
r to a true and ſound Converſion; for by this
ans the Soul is brought under a right quali-
tion for the receiving of Chriſt.

You muſt know that a ſinner, *quatenus* a ſin-
r, can never come to Chriſt: For he is dead
ſin, in enmity againſt Chriſt, an Enemy to
od, and the Grace of God; but there are cer-
in qualifications that come between the Souls
ead ſtate in ſin, & the work of Converſion & *ſee* Nori-
oſing with Chriſt, whereby the Soul is put in- on's *Orth.*
a capacity of receiving the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Evangel.*
or no Man is brought immediately out of his p. 130.
ead ſtate, & made to believe in Jeſus Chriſt;
here are *termini mediantes*, ſome qualifications
ming in between; now ſound Convictions
e the right qualifications for the ſinners re-
iving Chriſt; *for he came not to call the righte-* Mat. 9.
us, but ſinners to repentance; that is, ſuch as ſee 12, 13.
hemſelves ſinners, and thereby in a loſt condi-
ion; ſo *Luke* examples it, *The Son of Man is* *Luk* 9.10.
me to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt; he
anointed, and ſent to bind up the broken hearted, *Iſa.* 61.
comfort all that mourn. 1, 2.

Oh therefore, if you would be ſound Chri-
ians, get ſound Convictions; aſk thoſe that
are

are believers indeed; & they will tell you, had it not been for their Convictions, they had never sought after Christ for sanctification and Salvation; they will tell you, they had perished, if they had not perished; they had been in *eternal bondage*, but for their *spiritual bondage*: had they not been lost as to themselves, they had been utterly lost as to Christ.

Perissem nisi perisſem.

Direct. 3. *Never rest in Convictions till they end in Conversion*, this is that wherein most men miscarry, they rest in their Convictions and take them for Conversion, as if sin seen were therefore forgiven, or as if a sight of the want of Grace were the truth of the work of Grace.

That is a notable place in *Hos.* 13. 13. *Ephraim is an unwise Son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* The place of the breaking forth of Children is the Womb; as the Child comes out of the Womb, so is Conversion born out of the Womb of Conviction; now when the Child sticks between the Womb and the World, it is dangerous, it hazards the life both of Mother and Child; so when a Sinner rests in Conviction, and goes no farther, but sticks *in the place of the breaking forth of Children*: this is very dangerous, and hazards the life of the Soul.

You that are at any time under *Convictions*, oh, take heed of resting in them, do not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children; though it is true, that Conviction is the first step to Conversion, yet it is not Conversion; a man may carry his Convictions along with him into Hell.

What is that which troubleth poor Creatures when they come to die, but this, I have not improved my Convictions? at such a time I was convinced of sin, but yet I went on

on in ſin in the face of my Convictions; in ſuch a Sermon I was convinced of ſuch a duty, but I ſlighted the Conviction; I was convinced of my want of Chriſt, and of the readineſs of Chriſt to pardon and ſave, but alas I followed not the Conviction.

My *Brethren*, remember this, *ſlighted Convictions* are the worſt death-bed companions. There are two things eſpecially which above all others make a death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purpoſes and Promiſes not performed.*
2. *Convictions ſlighted, and not improved.*

When a man takes up purpoſes to cloſe with Chriſt, and yet puts them not in execution; and when he is convinced of ſin and duty, and yet improves not his Convictions; oh this will ſting and wound at laſt.

Now therefore, hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your Souls? have you ever been convinced of the evil of ſin, of the miſery of a natural ſtate, of the inſufficiency of all things under Heaven to help, of the fulneſs and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, of the neceſſity of reſting upon him for pardon and peace, for ſanctification and ſalvation? Have you ever been really convinced of theſe things? Oh then as you love your own Souls, as ever you hope to be ſaved at laſt, and enjoy God for ever, improve theſe Convictions, and be ſure you reſt not in them till they riſe up to a through cloſe with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo end in a ſound and perfect converſion. Thus ſhall you be not only *almoſt*, but *altogether a Chriſtian.*

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